

THE  
NIGHT'S  
CANDLES



RENÉ  
ROY



AMERICAN FOUNDATION  
FOR THE BLIND INC.

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## THE NIGHT'S CANDLES



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# THE NIGHT'S CANDLES

BY  
RENÉ ROY

*Translated by*  
HOMER WHITE

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SET UP BY BROWN BROTHERS LINOTYPER  
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TO  
M. EUGÈNE BRIEUX  
MY ESTEEM AND  
MY GRATITUDE



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*I hope that I shall not appear to blaspheme against unhappy genius if I say that Milton, deprived of the light, Beethoven, shut out from the realm of sound, Pascal, paralysed by illness, and Dante, exiled from his city, were among all their brothers in misfortune the most happily consoled . . . because it is a world of imagination in which the blind see, to which the deaf listen, wherein the helpless move and the exiled live as in a divine Florence. I know their laments (whereby the world has been made more beautiful); but it is nevertheless a consolation to have made of their own grief a remedy for the sorrows of mankind and a solution of the problem of evil in the universe.*

“Les Maîtres”  
MAURICE BARRÈS.



## FOREWORD

*During the attack of the Chemin des Dames, when I was not quite twenty-three years of age, I received a wound that blinded me for life.*

That is the first sentence of this book.

And here is the last:

*The man whose heart has been touched by love, tenderness, friendship has no right to curse his fate; he will have known everything in this world that makes it significant.*

That simple comparison will suffice to point the brave and admirable example set us by the man René Roy, who had just been admitted to the *École Polytechnique* when the war broke out, who was totally blinded in 1917, and who graduated in 1920 with first honors from the same *École Polytechnique*, and exercises to-day as State Engineer of Bridges and Water-

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ways the technical skill acquired after his injury.

This book is the account of his desolation and his hopes, his struggle and his final victory against the darkness. I have never met with anything more touching, more impelling, more inspiring. I do not know of a more splendid showing of resolution, nobility and spiritual energy.

Think of the agony that René Roy must have endured when he knew, at twenty-three, that he was hopelessly blind. Those who are blind from birth live, we are told, in peace; they cannot regret what they have never known. But this man, this young man, sensitive, imaginative, conscious of his powers, dreaming of a future which he had every right to think would be bright and fortunate . . . what must have been his distress! His emotional reserve prevents him from speaking of it in his story; but a single line betrays him: *I considered one after another all the possible methods of putting an end to my life, from the most classical to the most exaggerated.*

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One marvels at the strength and vital intensity of René Roy, which could lead him from that inevitable despair into the serenity that made him write this at the last: *Surrounded by those who are dear to me, I follow my destiny, more laboriously, to be sure, than another, troubled by many unappeasable desires but forgetting them in the consolations which have been scattered so prodigally in my way.* And to that double cry of pain and of peace regained he adds not a single word of bitterness.

And yet! . . . René Roy was convinced that earlier treatment of his injury would have saved one of his eyes. He says as much, quite simply, and then writes this sublime sentence: *Such incidents are an inherent part of the risks of war; and since armed conflict is a product of human imperfection, it is but natural that men should carry into it the carelessness and the unthinking routine which govern the ordinary conduct of their lives.*

To speak with calm reasonableness when he

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might justly have spoken passionately of injustice is superb.

But it is even more superb that he did not resign himself sluggishly to his fate nor give back from action. René Roy very soon came to demand the reality of a dream that at first seemed pure madness; he re-entered the *École Polytechnique* to which he had just been admitted at the declaration of war. Behind the modesty with which he veils them we can discern the immense difficulties he had to conquer. That he finally did conquer them is a tribute at once to his unusual intellectual abilities and to the vigilant and careful collaboration of his teachers in the Reconstructional Hospitals maintained by the aid of America.

For a psychologist this book is a most rare and precious document. Here, with the accent of perfect sincerity, the clarity of a scientific mind and the analytical subtlety of an artist, René Roy describes without affectation or vanity the various states of his consciousness and the stages of his return to a life that is almost normal.

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He might have called his work, "The Conquest of Light, in Twelve Years" . . . or better still, "The Light Regained."

He tells us how his mind was continuously filled with colored images that arose out of the time past, when he could see, how even a touch, a noise, an odour, a name would recall them. He tells us of his dreams, how his sight returned to him then and night came only when he awakened.

In quiet words he tells us how he felt when for the first time he had to seek the aid of another person in order to learn the contents of an anxiously awaited letter; and we may guess at his pain as, with letter in hand, he waited for some one to come and read—awkwardly and coldly—the tender words that he would have liked so well to be the only one to know.

He tells us also how he pictures the friends that he has made since his blindness; and with a reserve which commands respect he allows us to catch just a glimpse of his sorrow at being unable to imagine the face of her whom he married, or of the children whose smiles he

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will never see, "whose development I cannot follow," he writes, "except through the description of others."

This is what he has to say of his little daughter: *She is full of plans for the future, and talks of the day when she will read to me and take me out for a walk by herself.* And of his son: *Her brother is still too young to understand, and when he runs to my arms he thinks that I am quite capable of protecting him against any possible enemy; when he walks along with me, holding to my hand, he thinks that I am leading him; and before long he will ask me to read to him the little stories in his picture-book.*

We cannot read that without being deeply moved, without feeling a great admiration for one who meets such trials with such courage.

BRIEUX,  
of the *Académie Française*

## THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE

DURING the attack of the Chemin des Dames, when I was not quite twenty-three years of age, I received a wound that blinded me for life.

The pages that follow have been dictated by an instinctive need to express the emotions and thoughts inspired by the loss of so precious a faculty at an age when ordinarily the mind runs to less serious things and one thinks only of giving rein to bodily activity.

Being reluctant to speak directly of myself, I thought first of setting down these impressions in the form of a dialogue. But M. Brieux, to whom I submitted the plan, disagreed with me, and insisted that a straightforward recital of the facts and of my honest feelings would be infinitely more vivid and significant. He went on to say how interesting it would be to

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read the faithful report of a man who had been content to speak only of his own life, be it ever so ordinary.

In spite of my repugnance to the hateful First Person I agreed with his opinion, conscious that after all I had been nothing more than a paltry instrument of destiny, a mere receptacle of experiences that were in themselves sufficiently rare to be of some value.

M. Brieux insisted, furthermore, that the publication of the mental history contained in these pages was in a manner a duty which I owed to others. It was perhaps this argument that overcame my final objections.

Because of the pressure of other tasks, I did not return to the work until long after my first attempt. I was unable to undertake it in its present new form until very recently, and have now compelled myself to finish it about twelve years after that April in 1917, a date that marked a change in the orientation of my life. Thus it happens, I think, that I have been able to speak with clarity and understanding of the general period covered by this

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volume, without being less sure of its details in my memory. To have waited longer would have been to risk losing them in the shadows of a past that is already gradually fading from my mind, so much so that on occasions I can scarcely trace the continuity between the two phases of my existence and am tempted to believe in the dualism of my personality.

On account of the numerous revisions made in the original work, on account also of the slowness of the task, these pages, as I re-read them, give me an impression such as I once derived from the sight of a cathedral, the apparent unity of which sometimes arises out of the diversity of epochs that have built their parts into the whole; I find here the varying current of my thoughts, the innumerable indications of their evolution. . . . And if a few passages—quite a number, in fact—are the result of slow mental elaboration, the most of them are the direct issue of circumstance and may be accepted as genuine leaves from a diary. Indeed, in some respects it would have been desirable to set them down in that form,

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though in the large such a conception would have been impossible to realize.

Presenting as it does only a very particular aspect of the inner life, this book undoubtedly will interest a very limited public. And yet I know quite well that there are people who, "far from banishing every memory of the war, have given the best of their thought and of their leisure to relieving the evil consequences of it."

The book is addressed most especially to those people; may they indeed find here the expression of my profound gratitude. I am thinking particularly of those among them who by their unfaltering aid, their counsel, or simply their good will, have made it possible for me to carry on a career to which I had devoted my fairest years.

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## THE NIGHT'S CANDLES



## 1

## ANNIVERSARY

EVERY year, at the approach of April sixteenth, almost against my will I recall the events of the year 1917, and day by day, almost hour by hour, one detail calling up another, I follow in imagination the progress of the offensive in which as an obscure figure I took part at the Chemin des Dames.

I had known the country very well; a sojourn of several months in 1915 had familiarized me with that smiling section of the Aisne valley which lies between Beaurieux and Pont-Arcy. I remember clearly even to-day all those villages placed as on a shelf on the flanks of the hills or crouched in the hollows of the valley: Pargnan, Gény, Paissy, Moulin, Troyon, Verneuil . . . so many names that are dear to me, names that I cannot pronounce without emotion.

I felt myself drawn, so to speak, to that part of the front; perhaps unconsciously the prestige of Craonne and the memory of its Napoleonic battles influenced my decision when on leaving Fontainebleau I had to choose my regiment; perhaps it was a caprice of destiny that led me to the place where a part of my being was to be overwhelmed in ruin.

In the spring of 1915 I had had the leisure to wander about the country in every direction, and my horse had drunk of the many streams that furrowed it. Many times, from the observation-posts established in the sector, I had examined every fold in the terrain, that lay caught fast in the wire-entanglements set about the crawling white lines of the main and communication trenches. Because the artilleryman must acquaint himself with the slightest peculiarities of his field of action, he unquestionably develops a taste for the sights of the natural world; and of those long hours of observation I still retain the memory of the transparent clearness of certain landscapes briefly seen after a day of rain; the details of

them are engraved in my mind as eternal symbols of the joys scattered so generously before the eyes of man.

At the beginning of 1916 I left for Verdun. Then, the approaches to the Chemin des Dames were still in very good condition ; apart from the zone lying in immediate proximity to the lines, the villages remained almost untouched, and the presence of the troops had in no way lessened the charm of the region.

When we returned there in 1917, at the end of March, we could scarcely recognize the once lovely country, so greatly had the preparations for the big drive disfigured it. We could see nothing but encampments, swarming agglomerations of men and horses, munitions depots, convoys of supplies and artillery, all invested with that air of dismal ugliness which settles upon temporary incoherent masses under a cloudy sky, when the sunlight is thinned by heavy rains.

Many new bridges spanned the Aisne, many new roads had been built in every direction, and the intense movement of traffic back and

forth over the country lent an air of feverish activity to the scene.

Shortly after our arrival we learned the position of our battery: the Courtine trench . . . an advanced post some five hundred metres from the enemy lines. We set to work immediately digging our gun-emplacements and ammunition shelters. The final matter of leveling the guns was particularly delicate. I had to undertake that business myself during the night, sighting on the North Star with one eye, and with the other keeping myself under cover from the attentions of the German snipers. The weather was rainy, and the trenches were filled knee-high with fluid mud. An indescribable fury of energy reigned over all points of the theatre of operations, innumerable squadrons of aeroplanes manœuvred over our heads, while to the rear the air bristled with observation balloons.

We did not know the precise day of the attack, but we felt that it was near, the artillery preparation had so increased in intensity; indeed, the days immediately preceding the

offensive were marked by firing that in its violence and severity reminded me of the "trommelfeuer" at Verdun.

Once established in our dugouts, we climbed every evening to a little plateau that overlooked a great stretch of the enemy trenchwork. From one edge of the horizon to the other, as far as our eyes could see, nothing but flashes, explosions, the fire of rockets and signal flares! And we would come away from there with a vision of something vast and terrible, that carried us back to Dante's infernal landscapes.

Finally the "X" day came, and the "zero" hour; the sixteenth of April, at six in the morning. The order of the day was brief, and urged us to be confident; and in truth, on that point, the attitude of the troops fully complied with the wishes of the Staff. At the very moment of attack their morale was quite remarkable, and the waves of infantry swept over the top in tremendous spirit.

Once more I review all the events of that day as they file past in my imagination: dawn

under a grey sky, the trench choked with the feverish and excited army of those who were to deliver the attack; the reading of the order of the day, then an instant of silence, anxious and troubling; then the gesture of the section commander as he gave the signal with his cane, his face grave and somewhat sad; and the magnificent rush of the combat divisions, the lifting of our barrage of heavy artillery to the enemy reserve lines, and the automatic cool advance of those great devils, the Senegalese, whom you might have seen a few days before, shivering under the rain.

Soon the crackling of machine-guns arose and spread over the lines, the guns thundered incessantly: cries, clamour, the flight of an aeroplane, its fall near us, all the confused noises that are the echoes of desperate individual struggles on a battlefield; then the opening fire from our own battery, the gunners moving swiftly about their pieces . . . now reduced to three . . . among the dead bodies of Senegalese, which we had to push aside in order to move the gun-carriages away from

the burning munitions-depot; and, some time after, over the sector decimated by our batteries of "seventy-fives," a bombardment, carefully directed by a single aeroplane whose black cross stared at us less than four hundred metres above our heads.

Were I to live a hundred years I should always remember the terrifying whistle of those shells, I should see them resolving into black and suffocating mushrooms of smoke and fire as they burst in the soft clay, sometimes behind us, sometimes in front of us, drawing nearer and nearer, tightening their embrace, multiplying, crashing everywhere, while the machine-gun bursts ricocheted at our feet and raised little puffs of dust from the earth. Until the very end I should feel the harsh grip of a will-power straining to command the nerves and impose silence upon the stricken flesh, subduing the beating heart and forcing the whole body to resist the instinct of self-preservation, not by ignorance of the danger but by pure intensity of energy.

What mattered wounds, what mattered mu-

tilitation or the gutting of the physical forces, what mattered that which the battle might leave in its wake! To have known how to remain courageous, to have kept one's coolness and sanity of mind in such an hour . . . was that not a challenge to the coming struggle!

And I am still amazed that I went through the day uninjured, by a caprice of fate that had marked me for the evening.

I can see, in the course of that afternoon, one of my classmates at the *École Polytechnique* coming toward me, a lieutenant in a neighbouring regiment, who had been made an infantry liaison-officer and so had gone over with the attack. He outlined to me all the difficulties upon which it had run; the enemy machine-guns had been planted too solidly in their entrenchments, they had not been silenced, and they had paralyzed the advance of our troops; the operation seemed doomed to almost complete failure; all forward movement had been checked by the end of the morning.

Somewhat later I see myself in a moment of

calm stretched out upon a little rise that overlooked the trenches, letting my glance wander over the hilltops, which the answering gunfire of the enemy was crowning with a heavy cloud of smoke.

Doubtless it was a mysterious intuition that compelled me to look with such attention upon the details of that countryside which was so familiar to me and which was to be the ultimate horizon upon which my eyes would rest. From the new positions held by our shock troops men were leading back small groups of prisoners; under their massive trench-helmets the latter seemed rather pleased to have got out of it so lightly; soon they would be giving a hand to our stretcher-bearers, helping them evacuate the wounded.

Strong in the good fortune that had favoured me up to that moment, I thought myself invulnerable and was very little disturbed over the shells that were bursting all about me. And it was in such a state of mind that I found myself that evening chatting gaily with a fellow artilleryman and a stretcher-bearer at the

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intersection of two communication trenches when the enemy launched a counter-attack. "Heavies" began falling, singly at first, then in groups; I heard them detonate, without being further annoyed . . . having become so used to the roar of them during the preceding days.

I particularly noticed the one which was to strike me down; I listened as its whine became sharper and louder, still not dreaming that it was destined for me; and then abruptly it arrived, with the noise of a locomotive.

I had the feeling that my head had been torn off. After a paralyzing instant I lifted my hand to my face, thinking to discover a frightful wound there. But there was nothing: apart from a few splinters of steel driven into my face, the worst damage seemed to be a pair of bruised eyes. Of my two companions one was untouched, the other had collapsed with a groan.

My first reaction was one of stupor . . . and surprise, too, that I had been hit after having been spared so long. Then anger swept away the first reaction, anger at the stupidity

of this wound that had come *after* the attack, anger at having been struck only in the eyes when such an explosion should have annihilated all three of us. For some reason . . . I did not quite know why . . . my escape from death and my unlucky wound irritated me profoundly.

I was not long, however, in losing that feeling: an intolerable headache overcame me as soon as I was taken to a nearby dugout to be given first-aid.

I could still see a little, though not very much. I could not recognize the persons who gathered around me, I could distinguish only shadows, silhouettes already vague and grey. And yet those shadowy forms were beings whom I had known as brothers, whom I had commanded for more than a year, and whose faces were every one familiar to me. ,

Frankly, I did not as yet appreciate the seriousness of my wound and so could not philosophize upon its consequences.

Knowing myself useless now, with nothing in my power to do on that vast battlefield, I

could only go away from it. I must leave the men to whom I had been united by so many hardships and common memories; I must leave them to carry on their glorious mission, without me.

Supported by two gunners of my battery I walked toward the entrance of the dugout, where I ran into another of my own men. Although for some time he had been in charge of telephone under me, I did not recognize him, and asked who it was: that was the first time that I ever put such a question. How many times afterwards would I repeat it!

Then, guided by my two companions, I made my way through a complicated labyrinth of trenches to the shelter that served as a front-line dressing station; the entrance of it was marked by a few feeble electric lights, which I could still see; into the refuge beneath we went, quickly, for it was exposed to the heavy fire of the enemy artillery.

I shall cut short my description of the dressing station. Too many writers have depicted the horror that overcame one upon entering

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such places; this one was particularly sinister, feebly lighted and overrun with wounded, who were crowding about the nurses. . . When an attack fails, everything proclaims it, from the centre of the fighting to the remotest part of the organization behind the lines.

The surgeon recognized me, having met me once in another sector. But now he was fearfully overworked, and had no time to examine me carefully. He looked casually at the wounds, reassured me, and advised me to rest a bit while I waited my turn to be taken out of the lines. I accepted his suggestion and allowed him to lead me to a cot.

On it I spent a feverish and restless night, in an atmosphere that was heavy with suffering and pain. By morning the number of wounded had increased, and I had to insist very emphatically before they would change my dressing. I was examined again, and as I could no longer discern shapes, they led me to the entrance of the dugout; there I could see a bit of grey sky distinctly, and the surgeon-major, satisfied with that, begged me to be pa-

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tient a little longer. He hoped that shortly they would be able to transfer me to the nearest hospital. I resigned myself to the delay, though not without a protest at the slowness with which the evacuation was proceeding.

The rest of that day, then the night, passed wearily. Frightfully tired and unnerved, incapable of thought, I had but one fixed idea. And that was, to get away from the place where I knew very well I was compromising my last chance of recovery.

Next morning the experiment of the previous evening was repeated : this time everything was black, there was no longer the slightest impression on my retina ; I felt as though I had been enveloped with darkness and imprisoned in an unimaginable obscurity.

I begged the chief surgeon to have me removed at once. And when he told me of the difficulties of transportation from the dressing station to the field hospital, I asked that I be allowed to walk there in company with one of the wounded men who could guide me.

And it was in that fashion that I left forever

the battlefields—calmer now since our offensive had been checked. In reality it was toward another field that I went: the new existence that was to be my lot.

How I would have liked to see again that bit of French soil upon which henceforth in my mind the years of fighting seemed to converge! Banks of the Aisne, that were witness of my first young enthusiasm as a soldier, wooded hills, paths full of freshness, rolling country that framed my walks and my hours of solitude and thought, I do not condemn you because it was in you that my eyes had their latest glimpse of the world's beauty! And you, month of April, month of renascent light and vibrant nature, you that with an irreparable blow struck my life . . . I remember you always, with sadness, but never with rancour.

And you, my comrades, who that day proved your courage in my sight and your abnegation and devotion, who gave me your hand when I needed it . . . when I think of you I am carried back to the unforgettable hour, and in it I find the surest proofs of your

character. My friends, I have thought very much of you since that day when I left you behind in the fight. An impassioned though helpless spectator, I have never lost you from my heart: over the fields of the Aisne I have imagined you fighting step by step; in the valleys of Alsace I have watched you halt for breath, defend yourself, give back stubbornly on the piteous roads of the Santerre, then, springing forward again in the magnificence of your soul, burst through the fields of Champagne to speed from victory to victory.

In all your reverses and misfortunes I too have suffered, as though I had taken part in them. In my sterile inaction I have rejoiced in your success as though it had been my own.

I have envied you more than once, more than once have been overtaken by a nostalgia for your life, which was my own for so many months. And my heart is stirred as I recall your zeal and your high spirits that flourished in the unlikely soil of hardships and discipline.

What if your hands were sometimes very

dirty, your chins rough-shaven, your tunics ragged! Your behaviour was loyal and worthy of a soldier. And your smart salute was sheer delight to me! My friend, I should like very much to have felt the rugged strength of your great hand as it gripped mine, when at last you bade farewell to the army, I should like to have seen in days of peace the bold light in your eyes that flamed so magnificently in battle . . . as a memory to carry me through my evil days of lassitude and discouragement.

And then I think of the long trying hours when at times my own spirit flinched under the brutality of the shock. Surely nothing but a constant and heroic effort brought those younger men to look with an unimpassioned eye upon the face of death. They were yet filled with the illusions of youth; surely nothing but a great inner strength bore them up when they felt on their shoulder the crushing hand of destiny.

## DISTRESS

MEANWHILE my companion and I went down through the trenches toward the field hospital, several kilometres away. We moved very slowly, because I was not yet accustomed to going about on the arm of a guide. What a contrast it was, this laborious retreat, with the advance a few days before, when I had walked with all the vigour and confidence of youth, with all the hope, too, that we had built upon an attack that might very well free that region of the enemy! The trenches were crammed with the interminable lines of soldiers destined to fill the horrible gaps in the ranks of the combat divisions.

On my way I came across several men of my own company. They walked along with me for a bit and told me that my unit had literally been annihilated the night after our at-

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tack. So my wound had undoubtedly saved me from death.

I was passed successively from the field hospital to the ambulance, then to a bed in the evacuation hospital, and at last found myself in one of those desperately slow hospital-trains.

Arrived at Paris, my stretcher was set down on the station platform. Very shortly an army nurse came along; her voice was gentle, she comforted me with her cheerful words, offered me a cold drink, then asked if my family were living in the city. When I told her that they were, she asked if she might give them the news herself. Very gratefully I accepted her offer, feeling quite sure that she would be most tactful in her words. Then I was sent along with others to an eye clinic.

I had gone exactly five days without receiving any real attention. Of those days I have a perfectly clear recollection despite the state of physical exhaustion in which I performed the many irrelevant actions incident upon my removal.

And I remember that only once in that time did I have an intuition that my injury was serious: I had had myself taken to a doctor, who declared that one eye was slightly affected, no more. And his serene confidence had reassured me until I reached Paris.

Since then I have been able to review impersonally the events that followed. Having consulted with specialists, I am of the profound conviction that with timely treatment my case would have been partially curable; certain ones to whom I have expressed that opinion have been shocked at such a state of affairs. Of course it would have been better had I been given prompt attention. But such incidents are an inherent part of the risks of war; and since armed conflict is a product of human imperfection, it is only natural that men should carry into it the carelessness and the unthinking routine which govern the ordinary conduct of their lives.

The hospital to which I was removed seemed to be very well managed. There I was taken in charge by a nurse whose gentleness I in-

stantly appreciated, and after a light dressing and bath was got into a bed, a real bed with linen sheets, such as we soldiers were always talking about up in the lines. I was not slow in going to sleep.

The next morning I was examined by an eye-specialist who questioned me patiently about the circumstances of my injury and told me that he could not yet give me an opinion. He did not conceal from me the fact that one of my eyes was definitely lost; as to the other . . . one must wait!

Then to my great joy my parents came, having been advised of my return by the nurse who had tended me at the station. Since the day of the big drive they had been without news of me, in spite of the fact that I had dictated a short letter to one of my gunnery sergeants before leaving my unit. I talked with them quite naturally and with a serenity that even to this day astonishes me.

The next morning I was operated upon, and spent the day very quietly, under the influence of the anæsthetic.

A week rolled by uneventfully. After the first moment of stupidity, my body full of pain, my head swathed in heavy bandages, my thoughts stunned by the persistent memory of the attack and the bombardment, confused by the endless transference from hospital to hospital, and at the very end of my strength. . . I wanted nothing but rest. I merely lived, forcibly indifferent to the death that had grazed me; least of all was I in a condition to understand that I had lost the most precious of my faculties.

My general state improved. And without being too fully aware of it I enjoyed the great comfort that was indispensable to a recovery from my complete exhaustion. Very shortly I was permitted to get up, and thus began the attempt to accustom myself to a new kind of existence; every morning when I awoke I was astonished to feel no more the delightful sense of renewed life and activity that comes in through your window with the flood of daylight; I needed a few seconds of reflection before I could convince myself of the reality of

things, like those who wake the morning after a death in their family.

I received visits from my people and my friends daily, and chatted familiarly with them as in the past. A little later I was allowed to go into the garden, where the patients were in the habit of spending the day in fair weather; a great stairway gave access to the grounds, and its steps were highly polished. When led down them by the nurse, I had to concentrate all my attention on the problem of keeping my feet. So, that stairway became the symbol of all the material obstacles which thereafter I must overcome in order to perform the slightest action. Later, when I recalled that first experience, I thought of the passage in Sappho where the man, as he carried his mistress in his arms, proved in her increasing weight the whole burden of his life and its trials. Not a slip, not a single moment of carelessness was permitted me.

Once in the garden, I sat down on a bench and waited for my visitors. With the feeble nonchalance of a convalescent I basked grate-

fully in the glow of the early May days; the birds would be singing, sometimes a ray of sunlight rested on my hand or softly passed over my face; the warmth of it was sweet, but I could not remember without bitterness the marvellous play of light with which once the dazzling star of day had filled my eyes, and the gay vitality which it alone can instil into those whom it lightly touches with its radiance.

Among the expressions of sympathy which I received then, I especially valued those of my army friends who were convalescent or on leave; for me it was a chance to remain in touch with the life at the front. A number of men also from my own regiment came to see me; I was greatly touched by their proofs of affection, which repaid me a little for the hardships we had endured together. They kept me informed of the actions in which my unit was taking part, they reported the casualties, they spoke of the citations that every one had received.

The attitude of my visitors was quite vari-

able. Some were very natural and expressed their sympathy intelligently. Others were awkward, intimidated by a circumstance that they had not foreseen. I sensed profound emotion in all of them, sometimes a kind of collapse in the presence of an eventuality which they had not dared to imagine.

My captain was literally overwhelmed. They told me afterwards of his despair, his tears and his hesitation before coming to see me; and yet I had never seen his courage fail him before, even in the most critical moments.

I remember, too, a visit, the best of them all, from a childhood friend who had studied and played with me as a boy: as soon as he entered my room he spoke a few words, and I recognized his voice immediately, in spite of the distress that it betrayed. He told me how glad he was to see me again, all the while shaking my hand warmly, for it had been a long time since we had last met; the chances of war had kept us always apart, we had never occupied the same sector, and our leaves of absence had never coincided.

His distress leaving him little by little, he asked me very tactful questions about my accident, what I intended doing, how I occupied my time, then told me of all he himself had done since the outbreak of the war. He was now on extended leave after having been with a battery of trench-mortars through some severe action. His voice grew animated as he told his story; and I found in it no rancour for the trials he had sustained, and no hatred, only the good humour of a clear conscience that had done its duty. One felt his vitality, one knew that he was alive.

And while he talked my attention wandered a little from the conservation, and in spite of me the memory of the years we had spent together in the *lycée* came back to me. I saw him once more,—my friend, though he was younger than I—his fine head speaking of intelligence and generosity, his grey eyes, his high forehead topped with ash-blond hair cut perfectly to suit his type. I had seen him grow up, and change, his mind developing as new ideas took root. Now, as I heard the accents of his voice,

his particular mannerisms reshaped themselves in my imagination; every intonation awakened a memory; the wrinkling of his brow, the movement of his lips, any one of his familiar gestures that I had so often noticed.

Quite naturally we began to speak of our friends: news of them had been very irregular, though sometimes we had run across one of them here and there. Our poor friends! They disappeared one after another. This one had fallen at the head of his company during the fighting in Champagne; that one had been made a prisoner a few months before and was now vegetating in an unhealthy prison-camp. Others had been wounded or were reported missing in action. It was my turn now. Already the news of my injury had spread among the survivors as they met casually.

Then we recalled the *lycée*, the professors, the student-rags that we had once thought inspired and that still pleased our young sense of humour. That was all so far away! Life had ripened us since then.

As he was leaving, I asked him about his

new assignment. He would rejoin his unit at Bar-le-Duc, and then go to Verdun, where he hoped to do his share in a big drive. It would be a great success, he felt sure.

"You're lucky to be able to fight still," I told him. "I'd like very much to be in your place."

"My dear lad, I know how you feel. But you needn't reproach yourself. You've earned your rest. . . . Well, I'll see you again some time!"

And he left, not wishing to speak any more of a subject which he knew distressed me.

I was never to see him again: like so many others he fulfilled a glorious destiny. Thoughts of him arise in me very often when I dream of those who are no more, and for a while he lives again.

Then, more than at any other period, I appreciated the support which only true affection and friendship can give. I cannot express my gratitude to those who lavished their attention upon me, who gave me the comfort of

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their encouragement, and carried me along with the generous impulses of their hearts.

Meanwhile day followed day, and my particular condition did not improve. I was the only one of all the patients who had been completely deprived of sight. My ward-mates were almost ready to leave, after a short treatment of their eyes; but they stayed where they were, for they rather enjoyed catching up with their indoor life, it was so easy and so attractive, and they had been strangers to it for so long a time!

Very soon I myself was able to go outside the hospital-grounds and put myself more in touch with people and things.

And then came the happy surprise of finding my friend who had been struck by the same shell as myself; wounded in the kidneys, he had got as far as convalescence and was walking about comfortably with the aid of a cane. Our wounds formed a bond of interest between us, and brought us even closer together than had the months we had spent side by side at the front. He invited me to lunch with him at

a restaurant. It had been a long time since my life had produced an event like that; and I accepted eagerly.

But it was the first time that I had shown myself in a public place. And in spite of the pleasure that his company gave me, it was spoiled by the torture of eating in the presence of strangers. I imagined the eyes of those at the nearby tables following my least movement, spying upon my awkwardness, and watching me—sympathetically no doubt, but—with a curiosity that wounded me.

In the confused murmur of their voices I thought I could hear remarks made about me. Their attitude ran afoul of the instinctive aversion I have always had from being conspicuous or being singled out from others. . . . When would it be possible for me to regain my freedom of action without attracting attention?

Often, too, the people that passed me on the street were unable to keep their pity to themselves, and I could overhear them deplored my condition. I was cruelly hurt by such dem-

onstrations; and indeed, though I am now somewhat used to them after a long time, they still arouse an antagonism in me which I overcome with the greatest difficulty.

On the trolleys and in the subways the passengers would obligingly give me their seats; and though sensible of their deference I could not help feeling a certain repugnance against occupying a place that had been offered to me as to a decrepit old man.

One night, in charge of our obliging nurse, I attended a performance of "Romeo et Juliette" at the Opera. There at least, in the shadow of the box, I did not need to fear the indiscreet glances. Soothed by the rhythmic music and guided by my knowledge of the Shakespearean drama, I was scarcely affected by my lack of sight, and regretted only that I could not for a moment watch the ballerines, the amusing intricacy of their dances and the fantastic colour of their costumes.

Some time after that I went to the theatre in company with my captain and found there equally no confusion. The play, the name of

which I forget, depended very little upon physical characterization and very largely upon liveliness of dialogue. Quite rapidly I identified the various actors, and came away at the end with the feeling that that source of pleasure was definitely within my reach.

One of my first appearances before the public at large was at a *prise d'armes*, where the Cross of the Legion of Honour was conferred upon me: rather than be decorated in the hospital I had chosen to present myself in the courtyard of the *Invalides*. And the holiday air that characterized the ceremony, the presence of my family and friends, the throb of the military marches . . . all these things aroused an emotion in me that I could not master. And so, I was unable to keep back the tears when the military governor of Paris gave me the accolade and pinned the ribbon on my tunic.

How far away now were the other *prises d'armes*, at the front! And far, too, that enthusiasm which the sight of the red ribbon on the breast of one of our comrades had awakened

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in us. The decoration now seemed heavy to carry, inseparable henceforth from the pain of which it was the symbol.

That evening at the hospital the dinner was more elaborate than usual. Champagne was brought out and toasts drunk to my health. The party lasted well into the night and made me a trifle giddy. But when I was alone again after my family and friends had left, I was sadder than ever.

True, the day's courage always abandoned me at night. And to fortify myself in those long hours of complete solitude I would remind myself of the time when I should regain my freedom of action. The thought occupied my long hours of sleeplessness; it pleased me to imagine the end of this horrible nightmare: I saw myself knocking at the doors of those whom I wished to surprise, and I could hear their delighted exclamations, their excited questions. "What! You here! By yourself? Then it's over? How happy we are!"

In the midst of the overflowing pleasure and congratulations I would watch the play of

their features, and the tender glances of their eyes.

But doubt was born, and little by little grew formidable and precise. I set myself to interpret the comments of my doctor during his visits. I questioned my nurse when she put fresh bandages on. And at once an unbearable agony of mind overtook me. Alarmed, I determined to put a few direct questions to the surgeon. He seemed annoyed and answered me evasively: I must be patient, furthermore I must not be so slow in adjusting myself to a new condition; he even added that a man could easily and very intelligently satisfy his need for activity though he *were* blind.

The better to convince me, he cited the example of a *sous-officier* whom he had treated at the beginning of the war: as soon as he'd got to the hospital this man had declared that he'd take cyanide if they told him he was to be perpetually blind. And so, though his case was incurable, they hid the truth from him. Meanwhile he became accustomed to his new environment and had even gone so far as to learn

typewriting. Then, once he was satisfied that his hands need not be idle, of his own accord he gave up hope of recovery and resigned himself to the inevitable.

The story made a deep impression on me; the doctor's words clamoured incessantly in my head; I weighed them, I dissected them. And I tried to react against the torpor that had overwhelmed me since my arrival at the hospital.

When I was clearly aware of my position, the idea that I might remain as I was for a long time, perhaps for my whole life, never left me, it pursued me night and day. It filled even my brief moments of sleep. And I began to think about those who would be my brothers in misfortune.

Before that, with the thoughtless egotism of one who enjoys perfect soundness of body, I had never wasted much thought on them. But now under the influence of my new anxiety I remembered having passed them many times on my way to the *lycée*, on the *boulevard des Invalides*, near the Government School for the

Blind. Though they had not particularly drawn my attention, they had compelled me to notice them unconsciously: the dark glasses, that weakened the expression of their pale faces, the uncertain walk, the air of gentle and somnolent resignation came back to my mind very distinctly. What did they know of the outside world? What did they think about? What kind of life did they lead, and how did they have the courage to live at all?

And now, here I was, one of them, after two years of war and misfortune!

Last year the horrors of Verdun, the heaping of corpses on the road from Tavannes to Vaux, the fearful incessant hammering of the bombardment; and to-day this confinement with an intolerable infirmity: was this not in miniature the history of an entire generation?

I almost envied my comrades who had fallen out there, even those whose overcoats touched with blue the grey monotony of No-Man's Land. Doubtless their death had been terrible, there where no one might help them and they must die through several days, calling

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to us. But at least it was over, they slept peacefully, they were saved from the lamentable prospects of life, the miseries of a living that was not life. And I had been so near to the death that I wished! A few centimetres more would have done it! And I should have been free!

Oh, why had fate stopped short so pitilessly! It seemed to me that I did not deserve this torture.

No, it was impossible! I knew very well that I should never bring myself to join those pitiful creatures who walked past through stares and murmurs that were an outrage to my sense of dignity! It was intolerable for me to think of the children standing aside and watching me with wide-eyed astonishment as I came toward them.

Every career was forbidden me, the pursuit of my studies was impracticable from now on. Work might have brought resignation and I might have found in it a great consolation. But now . . . like this! How could I learn anything!

Well, then it was perfectly clear! I was beaten, incapable of a single effort or motion or occupation!

In the profound agony of this inner debate the most sombre projects came into my mind. I considered one after another all the possible methods of putting an end to my life, from the most classical to the most exaggerated. I passed dreadful nights, a prey to incredible nightmares, sleeping very little, my mind consumed with the thought.

The collapse of my spirit influenced my attitude toward those who saw me the most frequently. They had a true presentiment of the cause of my despondency and tried to distract me. They advised me to begin the study of Braille, and told me of the most surprising examples of re-adjustment; but I would not listen, having not yet made up my mind to live.

One morning the doctor, who had had many occasions for studying such crises and who had been observing me secretly, called me into his office. He examined me at length and noted,

he was happy to say, a slight improvement: the retina, formerly quite insensitive, was now capable of a certain reaction to light. That warranted some little hope. But the treatment would have to be continued, and I must at all costs give up this idleness . . . to avoid being bored to death.

He knew of several excellent institutions where I might receive the best of training. He would fill out an order that would very shortly admit me to a Reconstructional Hospital.

Immediately I was convinced that this specialist had no illusions about my recovery. For a while I was consciously bitter toward him for not having told me his opinion at the very first, and also for having doubted my courage. But upon reflection I realized that I owed him my unspeakable gratitude for his wisdom in allowing time to finish its work of tending my hurt.

And so, though still very dubious about the results, I consented to the proposal that he made. "After all," he remarked, "you will do just as well there as in this hospital, and per-

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haps the contact with other wounded men will react favourably upon your morale."

And so it came about that I left.

I had been wounded three months before, was now in perfect health, and was taking daily walks on the arm of some one of my family. The thought of being able to do something made me look without too much unhappiness upon the new orientation of my life.

## 3

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THE training-school to which I was assigned—it was supported largely by the generosity of American philanthropists—was situated on the *rue Daru*, not far from the *Parc Monceau*.

It was with some apprehension that I came to it. But my fears were misplaced, for I was received very cordially. I was taken first to my room, then was put in touch with my companions, who for the most part were old residents. They had just been assembled in a large room for tea, which was served every afternoon at four. I judged by the resonance of the voices and the great amount of conversation that the hall was a large one; it impressed me.

I was presented to a number of the men, who seemed not at all embarrassed, and chatted familiarly with me and their neighbours and the people who accompanied them. The naturalness of their voices and their speech

astonished me. To one who could not see, the company was in no way different from the most commonplace tea party.

From the very beginning I was struck by the cheerfulness of my companions and by the ease with which they moved about the various rooms of the enormous house in which we were lodged. Having relied heretofore upon a nurse or relative to accomplish the slightest action, I myself was very awkward at first. But I was immediately given a cane, with which I could guide myself through the corridors and along the walls, and avoid bumping into the half-open doors . . . a constant danger at first. Little by little I learned to get about by myself and was pleased at thus recovering a bit of my independence.

In the mornings before breakfast the director of the school assembled us for our period of Swedish gymnastics, which gave us an appetite and woke our sluggish muscles.

As in a bee-hive crowded with thousands of industrious insects, the house was full of brisk confusion, animated conversation, busy work,

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the noise of machines. Often we heard the notes of an exercise, picked out slowly on a piano, or the grave voice of a singer at his vocalizing. The total impression was one of activity and of life which after drowsing a long time had got to its feet and was directing once again all our impulses.

The meals were gay. I found there the same spirited cordiality that I had known around the field-kitchens up in the lines. Sometimes at dessert a cheery fellow would strike up a marching-song, and we would come in on the chorus. Then "Madelon" brought to all of us the double joy and comfort of a popularity gloriously won among the columns on the march.

The evenings nearly always wound up in lengthy talk, from which a good story of a certain broadness was not excluded. In the heavy atmosphere of cigarette smoke we passed all the minor events of the day in review, compared our progress in our work, always seasoning the talk with references to the military operations in which we had taken part, com-

menting upon them and discussing them like thorough-going strategists.

The constant intercourse with my brothers in affliction was stimulating, and I congratulated myself because of the decision I had made after so much hesitation and resistance.

Of all that I found to examine around me, I was notably impressed by the dignity of the men, by their fine spirit and the complete absence of bitterness from their words. And yet numbers of them suffered from disabilities that almost overshadowed their blindness and rendered it even less endurable: it was a leg, perhaps both, that they lacked; one had no hands; another could scarcely hear; others had lost the sense of taste or smell; a few found themselves condemned to depressing idleness because of shattered skulls. So that I, with my good health and perfect vigour, was almost a privileged character among those afflicted brave hearts.

Though they were recruited from the *élite* of the fighting corps, these men probably would not have behaved in a particularly re-

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markable fashion in their everyday lives, had not suffering forced them to call upon the finest of their moral qualities. So it is that the expression of character is in part moulded by circumstance, and he who might have led a perfectly mediocre existence suddenly begins to take account of all the resources of his being, to bring them to a peak that they would not have reached without the interference of occasion.

Observation of some of my comrades has fixed in my mind certain standards more clearly and fully than association with philosophers or moralists could ever have done.

In spite of everything and though they were resigned to a deliberate acceptance of their fate, the most of my fellows did not cut themselves off from their past. They were forever calling up memories of the happiness that had gone. Each one spoke with frankness of subjects that would have been painful to others than ourselves. One guessed in all of us a desire to pour out our hearts and show our common thoughts freely. We were men who had

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sounded the depths of a great distress and so had nothing about which to keep silent . . . and so disdained the timid preamble.

Notably I remember a particular conversation one evening, when one of the talkers asked each one of us to tell what we would do if our sight should return for twenty-four hours. And as the men tried to relate in minutest detail the happenings of that blessed day, I observed the extraordinary animation that sprang up in their voices, habitually so calm; and I could not help thinking, as I listened to the naïve stories, "For me, if I should win the first prize . . . that would be enough!"

First Prize! That was it! Our sight! A gift so legitimate that its loss seemed a violation of natural law!

The first one to answer the question was a young officer. Wounded at the beginning of the war, he was inconsolable that his energies had so soon been paralyzed. It meant that he knew nothing about the trenches and the manner of trench warfare.

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He would like to go up to the lines, to compare the reality with the pictures raised in his imagination by the reading of military dispatches. He would like also to consult plans and maps that would help him understand the nature of the battlefield where his country was at the moment fighting for her life.

He spoke clearly and to the point, and I greatly relished the simple modesty of his wish, as well as the noble heart which it revealed.

The second man had enlisted, when only seventeen years of age, in the infantry, a few months after August of 1914, . . . although those first weeks should have cleared his mind of any illusions about the fate of a modern infantryman. He would like to return to all the places dear to his enthusiastic soldier's heart, revisit all the sectors where he had fought, look again into all the dugouts where he had been quartered, roam about the cantonments where he had been billeted, climb the parapets of every trench that the enemy

had just evacuated and that formerly could be seen only in the narrow field of a periscope.

He had worked it all out. He was certain he could finish his programme in twenty-four hours. He spoke too with equal pleasure of the time that he had spent in the army, assuring us—and he was quite sincere—that it had been the happiest of his whole life. He had never lost his high spirits, nor his pride in the glorious memories attached to each one of his citations. He was free from bitterness and insisted proudly that he preferred his lot to that of his old friends who had been kept out of the great show by physical disability or rotten bad luck.

The third was a Breton, fine-tempered and rather taciturn, though not gloomy. Through his slow speech shone a living emotion as he spoke of embracing his mother again. She lived in a fisherman's hut on the coast of Finisterre. He would like to look for a long time at that shore-line, the every detail of which he knew; then he would walk down the old coast-guard's road, drinking deep of the bitter sharp

sea wind, then out over the country of his boyhood until he was exhausted. The sea was his only passion; here he felt overcome with nostalgia for its changing immensity.

The next one differed widely from the others. He thought only of amusing himself with gay company along the boulevards. It was intolerable never to stroll about the music-halls and the *brasseries*! He would do all that to heart's content during his twenty-four hours! Montmartre, the Opera, the Latin Quarter . . . nothing would escape his invasion. What a treat to the eye, those bold, pretty faces! Intrigues, adventures, conquests!

He overflowed with exuberance, and the lively pace at which he rattled on plainly showed the joyous way in which he had formerly spent his leaves of absence.

The man that followed refrained from making any wish, pretending that he had been caught napping; he added that it would be hard to say what he would do, even had he thought about it. . . . But certainly he had never allowed any bitterness to cloud the im-

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pression of his past happiness. In his opinion it was not a time for regrets but for plans.

As he spoke those stout words his voice trembled slightly, and we who already knew his heart knew also that his remarks did not reflect his private thoughts. If he chose not to speak of them, we were sure it was on account of no stupid self-respect. The wish that he hid would have betrayed his innermost secret; he was afraid of not being understood. And he could not have endured a discussion on a subject that was dear to us all.

The truth was, he had married his nurse only a short while before, and so had never seen the woman who had courageously joined her life with his. The thought of it was agony sometimes. Intelligent enough to know that a wife's merit may be appreciated without the use of eyes, and endowed with sufficient wisdom to accept his fate, yet he reconciled himself very imperfectly to the fact that he could never look upon his wife. It pleased him to draw imaginary sketches of her whom he loved. He would have liked to see her, just

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for a moment, a second. He was quite sure that the vision would live in his mind always to console him with its sweet light.

Then it came my turn; but really I had no very definite plans. I would like simply to enjoy complete freedom for a day. I would walk a great deal, for one thing. Because my severest deprivation then was that I could not come and go at pleasure, or stop when I liked and stare, or stroll casually about.

Moreover I was accommodating myself rather poorly to the loss of the minor distractions of the eye. I did not give up very happily the pleasant sights of town and country and the relaxation of mind that I derived from them. And I knew that since I was determined to neglect none of my former interests I was condemned to a strenuous mental effort all day long . . . a ceaseless kind of mental gymnastics. In short, what now troubled me the most was the loss of my physical independence and my intellectual poise.

Often during the night when sleep refused to come, my thoughts would rehearse the de-

tails of my childhood and my school life. I would see myself morning and evening hurrying to the *lycée* and hurrying back home: I was always in a hurry then. Yet I scrutinized people and things, until presently I came to recognize and speak to certain men and women whom I passed almost every day at exactly the same hour. I came to know them slightly and forced myself to add, from day to day, some specific new touch to my conception of their life, their social environment and their character.

If I had foreseen the harsh destiny that was waiting for me, how much more deeply would I have drunk of the sheer joy of living! I think I would have enjoyed my strength more, and the unrestricted play of my muscles and the easiness of all my movements. And above all I would have looked at things about me with a far keener eye.

And yet, who can tell? If that dear liberty, that priceless independence were mine again, not for twenty-four hours, but for always, I might forget my good fortune. Is it not in the

nature of man to desire more fervently that which he cannot have or which seems about to escape him, and to turn his back on that which he has, even though it be far from despicable?

But in spite of my very pretty reasoning, there were days when the loss of unrestricted motion was well-nigh unbearable, when I was bitterly conscious of the torpor of my nerves and the wasting of my limbs. . . . I felt that I simply must go out somewhere and run; I used to take such pleasure in that. Nothing could be more thrilling than the speed of the wind blowing through the hair, and the final joy of beating the others in a race.

Knowing how much my desire was shared by the men, I contented myself with a brief summary of such a twenty-four hours of liberty.

It was late at night when our group broke up. I have never forgotten the evening; it showed me very clearly that the long talks, as well as the amusements which the directors of the institution liberally arranged for us, definitely aided us in our progress toward rehabil-

itation ; because of them it went forward with even greater dispatch and discipline.

Shortly after coming to the *rue Daru*, I had found a number of my associates hard at their former studies, with the purpose in mind of getting their diplomas and entering their chosen professions. I was astonished at such definite attempts at re-education ; of course, I had been told of many, but I had remained a sceptic and could not conceive of any method of work which a blind man could employ.

I became peculiarly interested in the patient labour of one of the men, a Burgundian. He had decided eventually to teach and was working desperately hard for his *licence de mathématiques*. He explained a few of his methods to me ; but for my part I was not considering anything seriously, and studied merely as an amateur, more for my own pleasure than for any definite objective.

It was at that crucial moment that I was introduced to M. Brieux, who was then giving lavishly of his time and attention to the Reconstruction work : I still remember the sub-

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stance and the details of the conversation that we had one dreary October afternoon, in a room of the *Quinze-Vingt*.<sup>1</sup> Convinced that I could never fit myself for a permanent and normal career, I looked upon my presence in the Reconstructional centre as an isolated experience, or at most as a useful diversion. But the spiritual energy of M. Brieux, his great heart, the robust confidence that seemed to emanate from him routed the last of my scepticism and influenced profoundly the direction of my life. Contrary to the notions of the people who concerned themselves chiefly with varying our amusements, M. Brieux reasoned that our true objective was the resumption of activity in a form as like as possible to that which we had previously chosen. As he said, he could give us confidence in ourselves at a time when the public was far from being convinced of our ability, and could show us the only way by which we might win a lasting happiness and still keep our self-respect, which was endangered on every side.

<sup>1</sup> The Paris Hospital for the Blind.

M. Brieux, who was a genuine inspiration in the Reconstructional hospitals, would not admit that our presence there marked anything other than a stage in our development. In that respect his conception was widely divergent from that which would have left us in a huge institution for the rest of our lives, indiscriminate members of a common group. In his eyes the establishment of a home was our final goal.

He had just completed the organization of a large centre at Neuilly and suggested that I apply for admission there; it was in a new frame of mind that I changed residence in the month of October, 1917.

At Neuilly, work was the order of the day: the Volunteer Service Corps had put monitors at our disposal, who served chiefly as guides and readers. With their help I began to acquire some skill in the reading of raised characters, for, though fairly conversant with Braille, I was still far from a perfect command of it. Every day I had an hour's lesson with a man blind from birth, whose dexterity

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for a long time amazed me. It was not, however, without despair and discouragement that I completed this first stage on the road back to a normal life. The concentration necessary to the study of those tiny dots was exhausting and nerve-wracking in the extreme. And how irritating was their touch to the fingers! However much the child is content to learn step by step, the man, already accustomed to the speed of visual reading, rebels against the tedium of a method that uses a previously neglected sense.

But it was a joy, on the other hand, and a comfort when I was able to read my first book. *Colomba, Le Mariage de Figaro, Les Contes du Lundi* quickly renewed under my fingers the charm that one discovers in them at fifteen. Certainly books were not as they used to be, yet I spent pleasant evenings in my room going over the embossed pages.

After that I forced myself to read several hours every day, and attained a speed that was quite sufficient for ordinary needs, though it was not yet equal to visual speed. I must con-

fess, however, that although I employ Braille now in the requirements of my profession, I have never been able to make its use a real pleasure: the sense of slowness that repelled me at the beginning has progressively weakened, but to this moment still exists. I prefer having some one read to me. And yet, without the happy invention of Braille I should never have been able to carry on my studies, as I began to do then.

At the same time I learned typewriting—so marvellously adapted to communication with people who see. Many imagine that we must have a machine especially constructed for our use, with raised symbols on every key to distinguish it from the others. That is a mistake; we use an ordinary typewriter, and by placing our hands on the key-board always in the same manner can guide ourselves very easily as we write.

It was child's play, compared with Braille, and I can remember how delighted I was when, at the end of the first month, I was able to write a letter to one of my friends. My

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greatest difficulty was in making a mental draught of what I wanted to say, and then holding it in its original form, while I attended to the mechanics of the stroke. But in time the restraint disappeared, and though I cannot rival a professional now, I do write much more rapidly than formerly I did with a pen. I take care of my own correspondence now. It is a very genuine pleasure.

I have not allowed myself, however, to forget longhand. Thanks to the hand-guides furnished me I have been able quite easily to retain that unique mode of expression.

Having asked one day how I might solve a problem in arithmetic, I was given a *cubarithme*, an apparatus consisting of a rack of small pigeon-holes and a set of dice upon which Braille characters have been stamped, each character representing a number. By aligning them one above another in the rack one can manage all the simple problems and can even extract square roots. But the first time I tried to use it I was so long in effecting

an addition, then a multiplication, that I completely lost heart, and did not come back to the *cubarithme* until much later. I compelled myself to use mental calculation, which needs no instruments and which can deal with problems of considerable magnitude.

Arrived at that stage of my rehabilitation where I could write in the ordinary characters and read almost fluently, I had then to make the acquaintance of the Braille typing-machine.<sup>1</sup> I was, of course, already familiar with the stylus;<sup>2</sup> but, as with the *cubarithme*, that slow and obsolete method was a discouragement to me every time. So, leaving the slate<sup>3</sup> and stylus, I resolved to depend entirely upon the machine. Thanks to what I had already learned, I found it simple to use, and was delighted when shortly I was taking rapid dictation and producing notes that were quite read-

<sup>1</sup> The Braille typing-machine is in principle similar to the ordinary typewriter. It is greatly simplified, however, in that it has only six keys, which, when struck singly or in combination, stamp the embossed characters into the heavy paper required for all Braille writing or printing.

<sup>2</sup> The punch used in making the characters by hand.

<sup>3</sup> The board used in connection with the stylus. (Translator.)

## A WAKING

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able, under conditions that were, so to speak, normal.

Now that I was accustomed to the use of the different devices, I thought the time had come to resume my studies, particularly mathematics, in which I had never lost interest. . . . I had by then learned to work the simpler problems in my head, when sleep failed me at night.

The Braille machine offers the immense advantage of lending itself to algebraic calculations, because the equations successively deduced may be read and proved immediately.<sup>1</sup> First of all, of course, I had to learn the special algebraic notation which had been perfected by my friend the ambitious Burgundian. Quite soon I was dealing with problems more and more complex, and though difficulties always remained they did not prevent me from pushing on with the subject.

While I set myself this task I began also the

<sup>1</sup> That is, being set down in a single horizontal line, they may be read immediately by the fingers. Intricate problems in arithmetic cannot be reproduced by the machine, since the calculation is, in that instance, vertical rather than horizontal. (Translator.)

attempt to reduce geometrical figures to rational conceptual forms in the mind, and developed a taste for that branch of mathematics. *A priori* this might seem incompatible with blindness; yet, after one has gone a certain distance in the study of higher geometry, one easily admits the possibility of transforming concrete figures into simple mental creations.

I likewise informed myself on the various means of drawing the figures and plans in relief. Certain of them, like the *roulette*, which makes a dotted outline easily followed by the touch, and other ingenious apparatuses invented since then, have rendered a great service to men like myself; but I used them very little in my work, preferring a plain description and a mental picture, until by force of habit I reached the point where I could sustain a discussion on geometric propositions more readily than on algebraic formulæ, which the Braille machine had related immediately to my sense of touch.

The comparative ease with which I recom-

menced mathematics was a source of wonder and profound satisfaction to me. Bolder each day because of it, I presently began to cherish a dream that I had not dared entertain before: I would re-enter the *École Polytechnique*, where I had been enrolled prior to the declaration of war.

Then, while reading a history of mathematics, I was impressed by the story of Nicholas Saunderson, the English mathematician, who, although he had lost his sight in early childhood, nevertheless became a master of the mathematical sciences. He had devoted himself to the teaching of them and had had the honour in 1711 to succeed Whiston in the chair previously occupied by Newton.

It was at the same time also that I made the acquaintance of Captain Antoine, a professor of my chosen subject, who had been wounded, like myself, on the sixteenth of April, 1917. He was already far advanced in his own re-education, and so felt that my ambition to study at the *École Polytechnique* was very reasonable. His opinion decided me. And at

once, with the hearty encouragement of the Neuilly staff, I took the first step.

But even though I were admitted regularly, would not objections be raised over my unprecedented case? Contrary to my fears, the Minister of War made no difficulties, and I was armed with his official permit to re-enter the *Polytechnique* in the October term of the coming year.

And so the desires of my youth were to be realized after all. Under abnormal conditions, of course. But nevertheless I was to cross the threshold of that door before which so often I and many others had stood, watching the procession of the graduating class, *bicorne* hats on their heads and swords at their sides.

I paid a visit to the general and asked him kindly to furnish me with an outline of the courses, which I meant to transcribe into Braille and have in readiness for the autumn, so that I could prepare the same work as my classmates. He received me affably, and willingly complied with my request.

In high spirits over the success of my plan,

## A W A K I N G

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and full of determination, I subjected myself to harsh discipline in order to drive out the obsessions of my first days of blindness; and less than a year after my injury I was enjoying sound mental and spiritual health.

As I look back now I see in those long months of effort a veritable renascence from the intellectual lethargy into which my misfortune had plunged me.

I certainly did not underestimate the value of what I had lost. Never a day went by that I did not feel a sick longing for the past, a past that I knew had gone forever. The sense of irrevocability so completely dominated my life that of its own unconscious force it led me to think of death. It was as though I had been bereft of a loved one to whom I was bound by the strong ties of affection. I had finally grown used to the loss, without ever forgetting it.

## THE SUN BEGINS

RECESS was a welcome event when I studied Braille, for the excessive concentration was wearisome, and the monotony of it would have been unendurable had I not broken it by chatting a bit with my teacher. And through him I was introduced to the habits and customs of a *milieu* that I had known nothing of, before meeting him. He had been blind from his birth and had never seen the day, had always lived with his mother in circumstances that I thought very close to destitution; and the details of his childhood, his education, his whole life, were so stricken with night that my own burden grew lighter to carry.

By the questions that he put to me I could measure the distance that separated me from him. He was especially keen to have exact descriptions of the life I had led at the front.

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I would have liked to give him a part of the impressions I had drawn from that very fountain-head of a concrete universe, but I was constantly checked by the necessity of making a reference or comparison which was familiar to me but which had no significance to him: the tangled network of the trenches and the barbed-wire defenses, the harmony of the colourful landscape, the mellow tone of the red tile roofs, the slender silhouette of a tower, the dark line of a screen of trees . . . even the beauties of a face, the values of its changing expression and the nuance of its colour. What was colour to him! And his inability to create in his mind a world that conformed in type with the world outside him was of the same order, I thought, as the inability of all men to conceive of or visualize the fourth dimensional spaces produced by the metaphysical geometrists.

This absolute difference of circumstance was the cause of much misunderstanding and sterile argument between us. How many times did I discuss with him our chance of success in

the world of action. Accustomed to thinking that a blind man would be helpless in most professions, he did not understand how we could possibly choose from any great number of them. He had forgotten the background of his childhood, and did not even remotely suspect that for us it was a matter of adaptation rather than complete apprenticeship of mind and talents.

There I had the advantage. I was so strongly attached to my past life and so near as yet to all its forces that every sensation was translated automatically into a definite picture.

The importance of my early acquisitions and the value of that capital—happily preserved, thanks to a good memory—were in truth considerable. I would never have known how very considerable, had I not been obliged to rely a great deal on my memory.

A certain incident that I had thought vanished forever would come out of shadow under the impulse of a provocative action, and would be revealed with a vigour and perfect

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clearness that I could not have foreseen. The keenness of my inner sight was extreme and added a wealth of expression to the slightest play of a man's features. In that moment my sight was sharper than ever before in my life. Reflection might blur the sudden picture, but it could not take away the delight of the instant's flash.

The suggestive action came in a hundred ways: a touch of the least object, a noise, the tone of a voice, a burst of laughter, an odour, a name . . . and the past arose out of itself. Just as, when a fluid is in a state of supersaturation, a single crystal of its own substance dropped into it will instantly transform it into a stable material.

In the presence of this man so different from me I discovered analogies between my condition and that of a man who has fallen suddenly from good fortune into bad. Undoubtedly he would feel regret at no longer associating with the old friends who were still wealthy, and would resign himself painfully to the idea that their pleasures were quite beyond his reach.

But would he not also delude himself a little —for the sake of a slight consolation? Would he not tell himself that at least he was not ignorant of their splendour, and that now he could probably spend their money more wisely than they?

And, being thrown in the company of this man who had never known anything else but privation, I sometimes felt a personal satisfaction in telling myself that I should never forget that which he had never experienced and could never enjoy. I fancied, too, that he was continually haunted by a sense of his own inferiority, like a plain mortal who lived among gods.

One day I attended a concert given by the Valentin Haüy Society. The performers were blind; I was struck by the sadness of their voices, their mournful interpretation, and their choice of melancholy songs. There was none of that gaiety and warmth that an artist draws from the mere sight of a brightly lighted hall, filled with the discreet rustling of a brilliant audience!

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Happy beyond measure that I could take refuge in my memories of a luminous world—no matter how quickly it had been snatched from me—I felt sorry for this man who sat by me. Not with all the resources of his imagination could he ever summon up the quieting visions that peopled my dreams. With all his faculties, he could never own that mysterious one of mine that enabled me to make substance out of a shadow and so prolong the life that had died.

In dreams I escaped almost entirely from the hard grip of reality and lived intensely in the illusion of my senses.

During the first weeks of my experience my nerves were still shaken by what they had endured, and I rarely slept without having nightmares: the war, the dead bodies, the bombardment and the clangour, the shells exploding everywhere, I giving orders, the men falling about me, the guns thundering with savage violence, and my ears blasted with a wild strange tumult.

Later on, such evil fantasies came less fre-

## THE NIGHT'S CANDLES

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quently, though quite often enough. Even now it sometimes happens in my sleep that I hear the whistle of a projectile and gaze in awe at the "haystack" thrown up by its explosion. But new ideas were preoccupying my mind, and under their influence the dreams began to take another turn: because I was thinking so much of the day when I would regain my sight, at night I shook off my chains, and treated myself to the spectacle of my independence:

I saw myself walking slowly and naturally down familiar streets, whose every detail stood out in high relief. The people crowded to the doors to watch me pass; they pointed to me and remarked—so I thought—"Look! He's walking by himself now, he's recovered his sight. He goes right down the middle of the sidewalk, and isn't afraid to step out, either!"

But as a rule the nightly scenes of my freedom were troubled by an indefinable uneasiness, by the thought of some terrifying phenomenon that was about to trip me up, by those intangible obstacles and impending unknown

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dangers that exist only in our dreams. The stern grip of my fate apparently wished to show that it would not release me except for rare moments, and then only in an atmosphere of constraint and hesitation that involved even the simplest actions.

Often in these dreams I would find myself looking at my face in a huge mirror, scrutinizing every lineament of it. Then I would see presently that the eyes were monstrously deformed, impossibly swollen, like those abnormal things on view at the *musées Dupuytren*.

Since my arrival at the Reconstruction Hospital I had gradually become accustomed to the idea that I might remain as I was the rest of my days, and, the former preoccupations having given way to more commonplace thoughts, my dreams obediently reflected them. In the long months of hard work I had found time to visit and walk a great deal and renew my contacts with those whom I had known formerly, and equally to make new acquaintances through my new personality.

It was then that I dreamed so much of my

old friends; and all those childhood scenes returned that I had thought irretrievably lost in oblivion. But . . . what was most curious . . . when my imagination lay at the mercy of the fantastic power that gives our dreams the most improbable turns, the illusion of life was so perfect that faces and localities appeared which I had never seen or known, really, yet which presented themselves with absolute clarity. I knew how they came to be, of course. They had been built into my subconscious by an uncontrolled elaboration of known factors in my mind. They never varied over a period of time, and were endowed with as genuine an individuality as that of people and localities I had known.

The phenomenon is not surprising: it will arise ordinarily as we listen to a book being read or a story being told, when all of us will unconsciously create an image of the character presented by the author or the story-teller. Form played the most important part in the figures wrought in my brain; they looked like blurred photographs touched here and there

with colour. Human beings frequently became silhouettes, and character then lay in the expressive contours of the head, in the gestures and the general outline, rather than in the shade of the hair and the pigment of the eyes, and the slight difference of dress.

Colour, however, has remained a part of my consciousness, for my field of vision is not entirely black; it takes the form of a circle whose many shades of colour vary from one moment to another.

Meanwhile, the involuntary effort of visual imagination went on, even outside my dreams. As touches people, my pictures of them derived from the conversations I had with them: by the general manner of their speech and the peculiarities of their accent and phrasing I learned to place the speakers in their proper *milieu* quite as well as if I had been able to watch their gestures and their physical mannerisms. Thanks to certain qualities inherent in voices, I could even guess at the physical appearance of my interlocutors and could associate with every voice the visual mem-

ory that corresponded to its type in my mind.

Nearly every day after class-work the authorities would arrange for the presentation of recitals, plays or lectures. As I listened carefully to the ones who sang or played or talked, I enjoyed imagining what they looked like, their features, their height, their stage presence,—always comparing their voices with those of people whom I had seen and of whom I had a precise image.

I was not the only one to play that game. Every evening after the performers had left, we would exchange impressions, and contrast our points of view. We could even get ourselves involved in an argument over such and such a woman's age, her height, her complexion. In that case we would submit the matter to one of our monitors and thus correct the illusion of our ears.

Along with such ephemeral pleasures went more durable ones: association with people whom I had not previously known and who now were gradually included within the circle

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of my friendship. I went out occasionally with one or another of them; relying upon the similarity of our steps, I could form some opinion of them from their manner and speed of walking as well as from their voice.

It would be most interesting if I could verify the exactness of the ideal world that I have made without sight, aided merely by a blind contact with the creatures and things about me. For a long time I was haunted by that very thought, was tormented by the need of checking the creations of my imagination. The wish is after all entirely natural; it is confused with the legitimate desire to see with my eyes a certain countryside, a certain town, or a certain woman that one hears spoken of so eloquently.

Occasionally I indulged myself with the idea that one day I might be able to compare my hypothetical forms of people with the reality. Then I should discover whether my image had any resemblance to the object from which it had been derived. . . . Quite likely I should discover great divergencies. And I'll

wager that to compensate for a few pleasant surprises I should meet with a bit of sharp disillusion here and there! Such and such a woman whose voice attracts me, whose amiability, whose discreet perfume impress me with a sense of her fineness, might appear hideous and common ; her eyes might not have the colour I have imagined, she might possess none of the graciousness I have assumed. Such and such a view, the beauty of which has been praised to me and of which I have painted a charming imaginary picture, might appear ordinary, flat, and barren of all character. The house in which I live, every corner of which I know, every comfort of which I appreciate, which seems to me well furnished, excellently panelled, and done in sure and original taste . . . my house might appear gloomy, grey, glowering!

Then I was obliged to admit that I could pass by those of my acquaintance without being at all aware of their nearness. For a long time it was painful to think that if suddenly I did regain my sight I should be unable to

identify the friends I have made since my injury, even though I am their friend and have lived for a long time in intimacy with them and know their minds and hearts. I should pass them by . . . indifferent . . . a stranger, unable to guess by their faces the bond that unites me with them!

Now, instead of making myself unhappy over such childish impossibilities and senseless chimeras, I have convinced myself that I am fated to remain as I am; and I abandon myself without reservation to the charm of my illusions.

Affected only by the vibrations—that is the word—of objects and by the proofs of the senses left me, I have built out of their attenuated evidences of life a world that is patterned according to my impressions, my tastes and my natural inclinations. What good is it to wonder if I am near or far from the truth? Since I alone enjoy my particular world, what does the opinion of others matter?

If a person seems to me to be kind, gentle and intelligent, it is easy for me to conceive

him handsome, the personification of generosity, charm and graciousness. I shut my ears to any contrary suggestion and go on with my dream, exhausting the resources of his conversation, appreciating the clarity of his mind, enjoying the modulations of his voice, without once asking myself, is my imagination playing me tricks? If I believe that my impressions conform to the reality, then they *are* reality. If this house where I usually spend several weeks each year is comfortable, I make it more splendid and harmonious than all the palaces haunted by memory. Although it may be no more than a cottage, I endow it with a grand staircase, flank it with towers, surmount it with a gable and think that I live in a princely residence. I ornament the rooms with the handsomest tapestries in the world and furnish them to my exact taste, without bothering my head over what exists. If the country pleases me, if the air seems light to me, if here I can fill my lungs and feel my heart beat freer, if I love the chance perfumes that I breathe here in my walks, then I am transported to a site

as magnificent as the most beautiful panoramas that I once admired.

This assimilation of the diminished material of my senses with its visual interpretation in my mind has reached such a point now that sometimes I am forced to think quite a while before I can say whether or not I have actually seen such and such a person. Is it not, indeed, natural that I have constructed a legendary and illusory world out of my youth and my reading, since no concrete shape ever comes through the eyes to support the imagination?

How many of those who enjoy the privilege of sight have wished to close their eyes upon the misery and ugliness that surrounds them! How many have wished to escape for a little from the mournful spectacle of their hovel and lose sight of the deformity and commonness of those who are close at their side! How many, finding themselves in the position of the mandarin in *Le Voile du Bonheur*, would take the same resolution, and return to their blindness in order to gain the luxury of a

pleasant and virtuous entourage! How many have wished to live in full daylight the marvellous dreams that visit them in the dark!

I, who have escaped forever the horrible sight of death and its livid hand of dissolution upon its pitiful communicants, I who shall not again see the spilled blood and the twisted face nor again read any suffering in human features . . . why should I complain? If my lot is a difficult one at times, if it has created many new problems, if it has deprived me of the immediate presence of beauty, at least it has reserved to me the power to fashion a world in harmony with my aspirations.

I rarely disturb myself with pointless speculations now, because I feel that it is unwise to dwell upon them. And why should I, when reality is inaccessible to me?

Modern scientific theories have shown me the impossibility of arriving at the true essence of things. They reveal the imperfections of our hypotheses and lay stress upon their uncertainty and upon the necessity of their evolu-

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tion, since they are so often subordinated to the influences of the moment, sometimes even of the mode. Our Progress is only relative. No matter how widely we extend our knowledge, the reality of the material world will always escape us, and the deceit of our senses will remain the constant basis of our thoughts.

That the faculty of illusion, the country of the imagination, has been infinitely more enlarged for me than for others there can be little doubt. But because the difference is one of degree alone, the question loses much of its interest. A notable part of humanity, for example, has lived without suspecting that the earth was round. Newton himself undoubtedly did not foresee the existence of the principle of relativity. Meanwhile, the evolution of human society has gone forward none the less, and the majority of mankind does not appear to suffer overmuch from its ignorance.

I sometimes wonder if the profound study of natural laws does not encroach little by little upon the primitive charm of creatures and creation.

Perhaps one gains a great deal very often by not pushing certain investigations too far. A person may seem fascinating upon first acquaintance, and later disappoint us when we have looked into his mind and heart; a rapid glimpse of a town may excite us to enthusiasm, when a few days of living in it might totally disillusion us. By way of consolation I remind myself that there are innumerable optical illusions capable of engendering a lie that may be discovered only by the touch . . . just as the perceptions of my ears might be corrected by my eyes, if I could use them. Nature constantly provides the analogy in her mirages. They are real to the eye, yet they are false. And false, too, is the age of every woman who is skillful enough to combine natural qualities with the resources of art. There is only one sense which we may trust almost implicitly. And that is, the touch. Poincaré has shown the important part it plays in the elaboration of our three-dimensional space. It is a sense which I possess fully. I have developed it more highly, perhaps, even than others of my kind. Knowing

its importance, I have refined it by appealing to it constantly.

Thus by my resumption of activity and my association with men like myself, I succeeded almost completely in throwing off the despair of the first dark months, and by the way added much to the wealth of my sensations.

I was convinced that, in the long run, by training, I could adapt myself to every situation, even the most unforeseen; and accordingly I began the task by comparing my position with that of other unfortunates.

Frequently I passed injured men in the street. The person with me would hail them and we would stop and talk—my guide often making the same estimate as I afterwards. I remember once going to the *Hôtel des Invalides*, to one of the wards where they were treating the men who suffered from symmetrical paralysis. I spoke with a few of them and was solicitous about their work, their attempts at walking, and their chances of getting well.

They seemed very depressed and lonely at having lost so many of their old comrades,

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through death or recovery. Most of them had died. And the others remained there in isolation, stretched out upon their beds of pain, awaiting their untimely end.

Who knows if among the people we brush past every day there are not some whose imperfections are less apparent than ours, yet who suffer as keenly, in spirit as well as in body?

For my part I have naturally considered the unhappy fate of the deaf, and have tried on occasion to match their hardship with ours. But . . . to know one's self at the mercy of a child, to be certain that one is powerless to defend the woman on one's arm! That is a torment about which the deaf know nothing.

I am not unaware of the burden of that particular penalty upon one who thrills with the impulsive warmth of youth and yet is unable to give it the expression it demands. . . . We speak of the blind forces of nature, those elements deprived of intelligence and direction. It is of them that I involuntarily think when circumstances force me to measure the extent

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of my loss and the rigours of my present confinement.

When I call upon the good-will of a friend or relative to accomplish some slight action familiar to active people, I am committed morally to the greatest flexibility of temperament, whether I wish it or not. No matter how willing the person in question may be, I cannot treat his inclinations of the moment impersonally. And it is impossible, too, for *him* to adjust his mood absolutely to that of another; one is obliged sometimes to talk when one would prefer silence and would rather walk with a companion who did not speak the same language.

Such a condition makes of my life an endless struggle, wherein patience, will, and tenacity must perpetually be on guard for fear of being thwarted by some insignificant trifle. And while I might enumerate in detail the difficulties of my re-education, yet I should be attacking the subject on rather a minor side; for it has had to do, above everything else, with the training of the will.

In other ways my dependence robs me of pleasures I had never learned to appreciate before . . . the reading of a letter or a newspaper, for example.

A letter! Simple word, and one so often used! And so full of intimate significance. With what impatience have I once opened them, to discover a familiar handwriting that was in itself a mark of affection, that was sent in pure friendliness or perhaps told me of an approaching visit!

I shall never forget the first one that came to me at Neuilly, one morning, when none of my relatives were there to read it for me. "Lieutenant, a letter!" . . . and the regimental postman handed me the envelope. I seized it awkwardly, took it to my room, not knowing what to do with it, passed it from one hand to the other, weighed it, measured it with my fingers, tapped it, turned it over and over, and could not make up my mind to call some one to solve the mystery. My monitor arrived shortly after. I showed him the letter and asked him timidly where it was from; it bore

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the cancellation mark of a divisional post-office. When he had opened the envelope I inquired about the signature: it was that of a friend of mine at the front. Immediately I could see the fine handwriting, . . . very difficult for one to decipher who was unaccustomed to it. And so the reading was full of hesitations and pauses; my pleasure was spoiled, and my depression returned.

And now each time I received a letter I was petrified by the thought that some one must help me read it, a stranger, who would learn of my closest, most secret thoughts.

Emphatically, I reconquered a part of my independence when I learned to correspond with my friends without any outside intervention. And yet, though a few of them could have answered me in Braille, few of them went so far as to use that wearisome method in writing me.

And then, welcome as it may be, a letter in Braille by no means gives me the same pleasure as an ordinary letter once did. It is helpless to reveal those traces of character that

appear in the written word: the order of the pages, the colour of the paper, all those personal minutiae that are a positive joy to the born correspondent.

Not even now in reading a Braille letter do I get the effect of the rapid glance over a written page by which you find out what sort of letter it is, its tone, and the nature of its contents.

And then, the newspapers that I used to read! A quick glance at the front page . . . and the head lines and news summaries stretched out before my eyes, in a panorama that had balance in its form and proportions! My delight in that was now gone.

It is with melancholy, too, that I remember the long solitary walks I used to take in my leisure moments through the woods and the fields, a good book in my pocket, rambling up the hills to get the view and refresh my spirit, lounging about the town, joining the crowds in the narrow streets, staring at the shopkeeper's display and the printshop's windows: those simple diversions now taken from me, but accessible to the deaf!

Following the comparison, I tell myself that he may find refuge in the world of nature, where there are plenty of silent joys; but that he must forego conversation with people and must remain insensible to the inflections of loved voices, a stranger to whispered confidences and shut off from the sound of music, which is our great consolatrice.

What fate more cruel than that of Beethoven's! And do we not find the profound despair in his compositions of which he himself has told us in his letters and in the *Heiligenstadt* will?

Beethoven! How many times I had passed a bust of him on my way to the *lycée*! It was in the window of an antiquary's shop located on my route; when I had time I stopped before it to admire the wide brow, the firm lips, the stubborn jaw. I did not suspect then all the nobility of genius hidden behind that powerful mask. And I did not realize then that by turning his grief into joy, as a generous gift to the world, he set a sublime example of abnegation and courage.

## IN TOURAINE

IN March of 1918 our quiet and busy life at Neuilly was disturbed by the German bombardment. Like ordinary civilians we were herded into cellars. It was a magnificent occasion for pretending that we were like the rest of the Parisians; we caught up with our social worries, for every one was like everyone else in dark cellars. But after a while the repetition of such incidents interfered with the orderly progress of our studies.

Like other men, we were fully aware of the national peril and the menace that hung once more over our capital. Every morning I listened attentively to the reading of the papers, and in the conservative statements of the official reports I clearly saw the threat to our military position.

To put an end at least to the annoyance, the

directors of the Reconstructional Hospital decided to move us from Paris, and so, toward the middle of April, we left for Tours and were established near that town on a huge estate that was admirably suited to our requirements.

The first week or so was not pleasant. The weather was still quite cold, and the confusion attendant upon our change of residence made me regret the life in Paris, the people I met, and the amusement they afforded me. But the temperature grew milder, and I began to enjoy the quietness and repose of that splendid and charming province.

Life there was even more methodical than at Neuilly. I rose early in the morning—the sunlight poured into my room and filled me with its warmth—and set quickly to work at the lessons I had copied in Braille the preceding days.

At eight o'clock the breakfast bell rang; then came our calisthenics in the open air, the bending and flexing movements, the jumping, and the fencing lesson . . . all of which

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I enjoyed thoroughly. After that came the English lesson with two of the teachers. And after that I returned to the troublesome job of transcribing my studies into Braille. I was given for monitor a man who was a professor of mathematics in a provincial school—a circumstance that made it possible for me to work under exceptionally favourable conditions. Every day, after studying my assignment in mechanics or analytics, I would write the problems on the blackboard, managing without too much difficulty to keep the order of the equations and set them one under the other. At five o'clock, when we were allowed to go out of the estate, I would be met by my sister, who came down to join me in Touraine, and who, by her unflagging devotion, her energy and understanding had previously saved me from many failures during that April of 1917.

When the weather permitted we took walks along the banks of the Loire in company with friends, and finished the afternoon chatting or listening to some one read aloud.

I knew very little about Touraine, having

merely passed through it before. And so this was the first occasion upon which I had to learn a country that I had never seen. And I knew only too well that this province was, for me, made up of nothing but blind-man's tricks!

I had been too great an admirer of nature, too sensitive to the beauty of the sea, the plains and the mountains, I had taken too vivid a pleasure in picturesque cities and villages not to regret bitterly what could never be again.

Nevertheless, from time to time I discovered certain reactions to which I had once been indifferent that now gave me real satisfaction. The mildness of the climate, the freshness of the wind, the harmony of odours, and the sound of far-away bells at sundown . . . here were evidences of life that still captivated my senses.

Thus I made note from day to day of everything that the world had left to offer me. Occasionally on our walks we would go as far as Vouvray and dine under the arbour there, then

return in the long summer afternoons and spend the evening with some friends who had a delightful house in the country nearby.

Some of those evenings were notable. One stands out in my memory: in company with my friend I was leaning through a window that overlooked a garden, the air of it softened and washed clean by rain that had fallen during the day.

Gradually, under the quiet spell of the place, our conversation had died away, until at last we had fallen silent. Filled with comfort and peace, we spoke only with our thoughts, not daring to trouble the charm that moves over the spirit in such quiet hours. As the wind, laden with the perfumes of the night, brushed past our faces, we mused on the happiness that nature continued to spend upon us so lavishly. We had been deprived of a part, and so were better able to enjoy what remained to us, of the world.

Man knows almost nothing of the resourcefulness of certain of his faculties. And by the very nature of things, the loss of a principal

one calls out, not the development—as we are in the habit of saying—but the more extended *use* of the others. Just as a gardener fully appreciates the merits of his lesser flowers only when a storm has ruined his finest and proudest beauties.

Suddenly from the house next door a few chords on the piano broke in upon the calm of the night. An *étude*. It held our attention without distracting us from the silent communion of our thoughts.

Is there anything more simply moving than those preludes, sonatas and fugues wherein the composer seems to have imprisoned the secret heart of dead centuries? If we ourselves could have played, our fingers would have gone very eagerly over the keys, seeking relief for the taut nerves and the crowding weary impatience from which we had no refuge but in our self-control. Limited as we were to the more obscure rôle of tense and overwrought listeners, nevertheless we sought every occasion of learning that most desirable and mysterious of the arts.

Our curious minds tried to disentangle the emotions and the visual recollections of the past, the feelings we had thought forgotten or too subtle for description, which by a secret and marvellous association of ideas music always aroused in us.

After a slight pause, a woman's voice arose out of the dark.

It was young, and fresh, and rich in quality. The sadness and passion that it expressed was so in keeping with the nature of the music that we, knowing little about voice technique, were completely fascinated by the song. The poem was one of Verlaine's, called *D'une Prison*. Voice and accompaniment both were imbued with the spirit of the words, so that we could not, even if we would, escape the poignancy of the lines.

"*Le ciel est par-dessus le toit, si bleu, si calme. . . .*" And we thought how like prisoners we were, how shut in by dark walls.

Then stronger and more anxious came the words, until at last . . . "*Qu'as tu fait, ô toi que voilà?*" . . . We knew of a time when

that question had risen to our lips as a cry to destiny.

We admired the perfect adaptation of the music to the poetry. And in the charming voice that came to us out of the shadows we tried to discover individual traits, comparing it mentally with other voices, those dear voices that thronged our memories. We recalled yet others, the only means of identification left us now whereby to distinguish family, friends and companions. And doubtless we thought too of the thrilling sweetness of a certain woman's speech, the nurse's on the hospital train, where we had lain on our narrow stretchers, our ears still shaken with the thousand noises of the fight. It made us glad to remember the sound of her words, the sound that expressed to us all the power of devotion and all the consoling virtue of woman's heart.

In every way language took on form, motion—personality. For example, after I became used to having books read to me, I found that each one of them carried with it a mem-

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ory of the voice of the man or woman who had read it; so that the original characters of the stories acquired additional nuances, as an action does from a gesture or a picture from a special lighting.

Now the melody ended, and for a few moments there was a thoughtful silence. Then, as if to banish the uneasiness which might be weighing upon the listeners, the voice began another song, this time a ballad, full of regret, yet confident and serene in faith:

*Mon cœur, souris à l'avenir,  
Ils sont finis ces jours d'alarme,  
Où j'étais triste jusqu'aux larmes.*

When it was still again, we exchanged impressions.

The purity of the voice and its freshness apparently counted for a great deal in the emotions evoked by the songs. Judging by the charm and the strange appealing quality of it, the woman herself was young, vital, pleasant, amusing to talk with.

Quite often it has been possible for me to

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check the judgments formed by my ear; very rarely have the general characteristics of the person concerned failed to correspond with my mental picture of them. Few people suspect what a voice means to us. They are too much occupied with the face and the bearing of those with whom they talk to pay any attention to the striking beauties of speech. They are surprised that we can so easily identify the people we live with or even those we have not seen in quite a while. I still remember the astonishment of a friend of mine when I called him by name after the very first words he spoke, though he had not seen me in a number of years. Contrary to the usual opinion, I think I have never met with two voices absolutely alike, any more than I have ever seen two faces identically the same in appearance. There are of course some that might at first be confused, but the distinction, more subtle than in a mobile face, never escapes a practiced ear.

In addition, every voice has a definite personality, a character that is proper to it alone. The complex fusion of the fundamental tone

with the overtones, which makes a rich voice, has as much expressive value as the balanced features of a pleasant face.

The vocal organ has age, as well as sex. No one can possibly mistake the child's for the adult's. And moreover, do we not say of a voice that it is warm, colourful, merry, sweet, sensual; or, contrariwise, that it is sombre and colourless, just as a face might be? Do you remember Verlaine's sonnet:

*Quel fut ton plus beau jour? fit sa voix d'or vivant,  
Sa voix douce et sonore au frais timbre angélique.*

When I recall that evening, I realize that then I caught up together in one the infinite diversity of the pleasures that are mine to enjoy.

Being far from Paris and its artists, we could not repeat the evenings of entertainment which we enjoyed at Neuilly. And so, the men who had no friends or relatives in that part of the country had to fall back on themselves for diversions: they formed a choral society, which all of us joined. It was not long before

we were making sufficient progress to attempt rather difficult and choice things. A few of them left an ineffaceable impression. I can still hear fragments of César Franck's *Rebecca* and Rameau's *La Nuit*, that used to echo over the countryside those evenings in Touraine.

I myself took a number of lessons in singing. . . . Because it struck me that the art, which yields to no instrumental music in point of emotional value, might be practiced without great technical knowledge. Furthermore it was a chance for physical expression, and such opportunities were too rare then for me to let them slip.

Throughout the hot summer of 1918 life ran vigorously in every part of the Reconstructional Hospital. And in addition to some few official entertainments there were plenty of escapades, practical jokes, and pastimes that are inexplicable to a society that has never lost its power of unrestrained and varied activity.

Our spirits were at their best, perhaps, at bandaging time. The dressings were given in

a small room that one reached by the service stairway, on the narrow steps of which the candidates would line up before dinner. While each awaited his turn in the operating chair, as at a barber-shop, there was a running fire of repartee, hearty laughter, and stories out of the army mess-halls. Everything was material for a joke: the awkwardness of one man, the hesitation of another; even wounds and infirmities received their share of attention, thanks to those in whom misfortune was joined with light-hearted youth. You would not have thought that you were in such a place, the banter was so natural. There in that little room I was most sensible of the force of character and of the quiet and, as it were, unconscious heroism of my companions.

Occasionally a dramatic event would disrupt the calm of our life and awaken thoughts that were ever latent and waiting to reconquer our minds.

One evening after dinner the news spread around that one of the men had thrown himself out of a window in the small wing of the

building where the knitting machines were. The fact did not surprise us too much, for we had grown used to the idea of suicide when our issueless night first closed in upon us. Usually it merely touched us, and then was swept away by the sanity of our work. This time the crisis had been unreasonably prolonged, and none of us but knew the determination of our fellow to shut himself up in the idleness to which at first his wound had confined him. He had been in no especial trouble. Aside from his eyes he was perfectly sound. But he would not listen to us, saying that his life was useless and that he'd better get out of it.

He came out of the hospital later, however, with only a slight limp, which did not affect his health, and with a marked desire at last to do something. And afterwards his good humour and heartiness were the delight of all those about him. So, in his case, a brutal shock had been necessary to wipe out every trace of resistance and make him accept his fate.

The chief-surgeon, in the course of a num-

ber of operations, succeeded in restoring a degree of sight to two or three among those under his care. Then we amused ourselves by imagining the feelings of the men who had escaped from our shadowy place into a world bathed with light.

How would they find the paradise from which they had been driven so cruelly? I thought of every action, every step, every exclamation of naïve wonder, as of a child that had just learned to walk, every anxious and puzzled glance at the faces of the people who had been around them for months, hidden in a secret darkness until now.

But little by little time would unfold its shroud of indifference and oblivion and throw it over this present rapture of the sun's conquest. As was natural, their daily concerns would quickly drive our dim universe out of their thoughts.

Often I went to Paris on Sundays. A guide accompanied me as far as Tours, and I travelled alone the rest of the way to the d'Orsay station, where a friend met me at the train. I

must confess that at that time such journeys were not as tiresome as they might have seemed. The nation was in peril, and travellers were more friendly and cordial than ordinarily. One entered into conversation readily with strangers; in that way I passed many pleasant moments.

The brief meetings with people whom I did not know and who appeared to me only as a voice were touched with mystery. And also with regret knowing that we should disappear at the journey's end and so break the bond newly formed between us, very often a bond that might have been lasting.

The element of the picturesque always increased my pleasure on these trips. Quite often I met with American officers on their way to Paris from their headquarters at Tours; invariably we exchanged remarks and cigarettes. Slight incidents sometimes broke the monotony: we had to change trains, or the friend who was to have met me at Paris failed to appear, and I had to look to it in order not to be stranded and helpless amid the crowd of

arrivals. They, however, were extremely obliging. And the *insouciance* with which I regarded the mischance, as well as the good humour which every one displayed toward me can only be explained by the pressure of national events, and the need of solidarity that all of us felt.

On my flying visits to Paris I could sense the uneasiness that weighed upon every one there as it had in the dark hours of September, 1914. Our nights were disturbed by German aeroplanes, and often during the day I heard the echoes of the decisive battle that was being fought very near the capital.

Touraine, on the other hand, depressed me when I returned to it, it was so eventless compared to the city I had left. And it filled me with the realization of my own uselessness, my inability to take any direct part either in the fighting or in the trials of those remaining in Paris. But, as usual, my daily work dispelled such thoughts, and once more I was laying plans for the future.

It was during the summer of 1918 that I

found time to make two trips to the Midi, one to the Black Mountain, the other into Gascony. I was unacquainted with the country, but the friends who gave me hospitality took me to all the noted tourist centres and did their best to describe the finest of the sights. . . . A visit to the cathedral at Auch, flanked with its stairway of horseshoes; a drive to the suspension bridge at Agen, another to the reservoir-lake of St. Férol; and a number of evenings spent in the solitude of the mountains: these are vivid and picturesque memories that I shall not forget.

Even now I take great relish in that kind of recreation . . . to the amazement of certain people. I think perhaps I understand them. It does seem as though the enjoyment of travel must depend entirely upon the eyes, and that one cannot exist without the other.

Very certainly I am never free from a sort of home-sickness for particular places once familiar to my sight: I can see myself walking out of the station at La Rochelle in 1915, just after I had won my second lieutenant's com-

mission. Full of the confidence of my twenty years, I regarded the whole world as a reason for my joy, and nothing in that picturesque old city escaped my eager glance: the harbour, gay with slender sails, the arcaded streets, the winding alleys of the park, the breakwater at the sea's edge. Every day I rode my horse over the highway that went along the cliffs, from where I looked out toward the vast horizon of the ocean, on the edge of which, full in the flaming enchantment of the setting sun, lay the Ile de Ré. . . . After La Rochelle it is La Pallice that I see, and the chaotic turmoil of its port, where they disembarked the horses from America.

The flashing iridescent colours, the changing multitude of forms continually disclosed, the infinite variety of things . . . all this I must relegate to the land of chimera and eternal regret.

But something remains of the pleasures of travel. Only, there is this difference, that what I once considered a mere accessory has become of prime importance. Reflect, and then deny

if you can, that a host of sensations add to the delight of travelling without ever concerning themselves with sight.

Is there not, first of all and quite independent of scenery, a certain pleasure in having the tourist's attitude of mind? I speak now of the true spirit of travel in a man which takes delight in all those countless unlooked-for incidents of the road and so distracts his attention from his daily habit of dullness.

Everything at such moments stimulates me with its lack of commonplaceness, from the shouts of the porters and cab drivers, the confusing chatter of the natives as they crowd about the doors, to the animation in the streets and the irregularities of the ground, even the shape of the chairs in the hotels and cafés.

Beyond these natural impressions there are yet others which I receive in the constant association with my travelling companions. And if I cannot look upon a lovely place, or a historic piece in some museum, at least I can profit considerably by descriptions of them.

On a trip to Belgium I visited the museum

at Antwerp, and the Convent of the Béguines and the Hospital of St. John at Bruges. By applying all my recollections of mornings spent in the Louvre and the Luxembourg, and using every connotation that such rambles offered me, I was able to enjoy thoroughly a friend's description of the paintings there. He happened to be particularly interested in that art and had devoted his leisure to a study of the Italian and Flemish masters; through him I scraped an acquaintance, so to speak, with painters like Rubens, whose chief works I had never known, and even came to appreciate others like Jordaens and Quentin Matsys.

But then, some one objects, if description is all you get out of travel, why not stay at home by the fire and consult the writers who have depicted the countries you wish to see; or simply content yourself with stories from travellers, which very often are of excellent flavour and liveliness!

Naturally, that is a resource upon which I draw very freely; but it does not give me the same intensity of emotion.

Apparently one's actual presence in a place lends to its description a particular twist and a vigour and warmth that vanish when one reads a book in the chimney corner. The literary picture is more exact, more systematic, and perhaps more complete, but it is less directly the issue of nature and the works of man that it illustrates. Especially is that true of the ruins of dead civilizations; there there is a kind of mysterious attraction that draws you; out of the wreckage and the reconstruction arises a literal constraint; everything about them is forced to become a symbol . . . and then is revealed to you the spirit of the past. All the knowledge you have acquired, all the legends and stories, all the mirage of history conspires to give the ruined fragments a fuller and more coherent significance.

Such an attitude of mind is not exclusive to those in my condition. In a country where many civilizations have spent their power, every traveller meditates upon the events and the men that have made them illustrious. Hence is born the living impression that has

many times formed the theme of some literary production, "*Du sang, de la volupté, de la mort*," for example, wherein description has been relegated to second place, and first consideration given to the analysis of emotions created by historic recollections.

Conceived of from this point of view, such satisfactions appear to be more the result of a mental effort than of an æsthetic emotion derived from the senses. That is, the material substance is then made to play a subordinate part.

I have touched here upon a delicate and integral part of my inner life, in which illusion is of great importance. And so I should be at no small loss were I obliged to put on paper an account of all the benefits I have received from travelling, since they are so intangible.

Meanwhile, and nevertheless, I am still quite full of pleasant thoughts about voyages: the crossing from Marseilles to Tunis in fine weather, the mild sea wind, the noise of the waves under the ship's bow, the cries of the gulls, the conversations on the promenade

deck, the description of the African coast near Carthage, the slow passage through the canal that leads to the harbour, the merchants' stands in the *souks* of Tunis, the walk through the Belvédère garden, the statuette of the priestess of Tanit which I held in my hands for an instant at the museum of the White Fathers, the Grecian vases whose curves I touched in a hall of the Bardo, the tiers of the coliseum at El Djem, the Sousse catacombs.

My memory has developed to such an extent that I am able very often to create for another an impression that I myself have never felt but have merely borrowed from the remarks of people around me.

In the localities where I have stayed only a day or two I suppose that my pleasures have been rather transigeant and have left no durable trace behind them. A few places, however, because of the vivid descriptions made of them and because of the geometric simplicity of their lines, have remained, undimmed and perfect visual images. In this class belong the beach at Hendaye, the tidal river at Adour,

certain sand-banks along the Loire, the tide-waiter's road in Brittany—which I have spoken of before—and the precise and regular plan of Wiesbaden. They are living remnants of the impressions I have received in the past few years.

Of course there is even more reason for remembering the places which I visit regularly. Anjou, for example, with its low causeways and sunny roads, its flowery fields and its vineyards, and the soft pure speech of its peasants. And Normandy, green and sweet smelling from the cut hay, its winding roads bordered with hazelnut and woodbine. Switzerland, with its incomparable air, the chiming of its tiny cowbells and the calls of its shepherds.

Certain trips on foot, others by boat have brought me an almost complete happiness. Even a sunset thrilled me once, along the Loire, with its vague colours of rose, mauve, and violet that one finds nowhere but in that country of indolent charm.

Then, there are my many trips to the seaside, which have been an unfailing delight.

Naturally, not all of its variety and richness is for me. The changing hues of the water, the gay note of the straggling sails, the movement of the surf, the immensity of the horizon and the whiteness of the cliffs are lost. But, on the other hand, I have known more happily than ever before the joy of the rustling waves at my feet, the shock of the breakers, the confused murmur of the living sea, the keen ample winds, the noise of the swimmers splashing about in the shallows, the cries of the children, and the fine sand that slips lightly through the fingers and for the moment leaves the thoughts quiet in the brain.

It was my visit in Alsace, however, that caught my imagination most strongly at that time. I had never seen the promised land so dear to the hearts of our generation, although I had learned something about it from Hansi's sketches and the reproductions of the Strasbourg cathedral and of the pictures in the Colmar museum.

It was still in my own country that I travelled as I went through the narrow streets of

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“la petite France” or halted before the tomb of Maurice de Saxe or walked slowly down the road from Sainte-Odile to Obernay or visited the Upper Kœnigsbourg, stopping off at Ribauvillers, where I had been told I might find the nests of a few storks. All things considered, I prefer to have enjoyed Alsace imperfectly rather than to have set foot in it while it was yet under enemy dominion.

## 6

## ARMISTICE

THE first week in October of 1918 I left Touraine and established myself definitely in Paris.

Shortly after I returned I entered the *École Polytechnique*, in company with a monitor who was to remain with me a few weeks in order to familiarize me with the plan and the habits of the new locality.

There I found a number of my old army friends, crippled, for the most part, and unfit for active service. We formed a little group distinct from the rest of the new men—they were very young lads, really, who had just been admitted to the *École*. Though the disparity in age was not so great between the two groups—four or five years at most—the difference was nevertheless real: here, grown men, matured by the suffering, the responsibilities

and the frightful work of death in which they had participated for long months; there, school boys, who probably had fathers or brothers in the army or had already known the loss of them, perhaps, but who themselves had not been hurt with wounds or made sterner by intimate association with death.

In spite of the abyss that separated us, good fellowship was the rule between us from the very beginning, and the tradition of *camaraderie* never lost its observances. As far as I was concerned I had nothing but praise for the manner in which every one acted toward me. Among my younger friends in particular I secured invaluable aid in the achievement of my ambition.

As at the hospital, it was easy to mark the opposite divisions of opinion among my classmates, one finding it very natural that I should continue my studies and take my proper place among my own kind, the other rather surprised at my presence and betraying their doubt as to the outcome of my efforts. Of course the latter were careful not to confess

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their thoughts to me, but for all the obliging deference they paid me, I was under no illusions about their real mind.

Classes began almost at once. But before attending any of them I had to present myself before my professors, all of whom gave me their most generous encouragement. I was allowed to place a small table in front of the desks in the classrooms, upon which to put the typewriter that I used for my note-taking.

The hours that I spent in the lecture hall counted among the day's best. Having taken care to study the lessons in advance, I could follow fairly easily the development of the calculations and problems, and the elaboration of the intricate theories of modern mathematics. Once the lesson was over, I returned to the small room which I used as my study and where I kept the various apparatuses I needed, my Braille transcriptions, and a few geometry and engineering text-books. I loved the atmosphere of the building, the vitality of its life, and, above all, the long discussions on the subjects dealt with in our lectures. Talking

over the work and doing it together constitutes one of the charms of such an existence, and makes for many pleasant memories.

More and more I was learning to prepare my assignments by those discussions, too, and by oral demonstrations with one of my friends, who was unfailingly kind to me throughout the two years; together we got up the advance lessons, together we reviewed for the oral examinations, which came frequently during the course . . . by way of keeping the students in working order.

Though time was when I had been quite accustomed to these tests, yet when I found myself once more in the presence of an examiner I was very nervous. For I had never answered questions under such conditions. But the attempt was encouraging, and afterwards, as the teaching staff grew accustomed to my manner of arriving at answers, I managed to cure myself of nervousness.

I can imagine, however, the embarrassment that I must have caused those on the other side of the examiner's desk. Inspired as they

were with the greatest good-will toward me, yet they made it a point of honour never to give back an inch from the tradition of strictness that was a part of the glory of the *École Polytechnique*. Moreover, they were hard put to it to find a common standard for my classmates and myself. By the nature of their questions I knew how earnestly they were trying to discover if I really understood all the instruction. I recall, by way of illustration, a geometry test, previous to which the examiner had declared to one of my classmates that it was absolutely impossible for me to go on with his course: I answered the first question correctly. Then a more difficult one followed, then a problem, which I solved quite rapidly. The instructor was convinced at that point that I was perfectly capable of assimilating his kind of teaching, and gave me an honour's mark—which pleased me.

If it was relatively easy for me to demonstrate a proposition, or even one of the more involved mathematical figures, it was on the other hand more difficult for me to deal with

the written work which came at regular intervals. Thanks to the Braille machine, on the very first of these occasions I succeeded in solving the greater part of the problem on paper; then I dictated the rest to a companion who had not been so lucky, and who showed his surprise at my having got so far with so rudimentary a system.

Thus I laid siege to the prejudices and undermined the biased judgments about me, until I began to note a change in those who had once asked what I was doing in their company.

Into the middle of this happiness of mind and circumstance came the Armistice—which the turn of military affairs had for some time led us to expect.

The history lesson was rolling its monotonous length along in the peaceful amphitheatre on the *rue Descartes*, where so many young *Polytechniciens* had ripened. It was about eleven o'clock when one of the assistants arose to call the attention of the lecturer to the sound of bells. They were ringing in peals

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throughout the Sainte-Geneviève quarter, crowded with towers and belfries, where the heart of Old Paris still beats.

The unforgettable hour had come. It was eleven o'clock, the eleventh day of November, 1918!

Like all the others I was profoundly glad that the great drama had at last ended, and was not afraid to join the crowds that surged and roared through every part of the city.

Nevertheless, I was not completely lost in the wave of intense enthusiasm that swept over the people; in spite of everything an immense sadness tempered my joy. Such inquiry as I could make at the time showed me that my old friends of the hospital and reconstructional schools felt much the same way; under their apparent gaiety I knew their thoughts were like mine. We who had known only the monotonous dreary warfare of the trenches thought with envy of the triumphal return of those whom five years had spared; we thought of the warmth of the reception with which

they would be honoured, and of their pride at coming home the saviours of the people.

Without admitting it to myself I understood that an epoch had ended with the war, and that to that epoch I was bound with every fibre of my physical being. For was it not on the battlefield that I had seen the last of day? Was it not that ruined earth that had drawn my final glance?

Even discounting the irrevocable march of time, I cannot think now of a friend without seeing him as a martial young soldier. And it is so, too, that my own image appears to me when I am at the mercy of my dreams.

Another life full of grey mist was opening before me; and when after their demobilization the others should have returned enthusiastically to their work I should play an infinitesimal part in the activity, I should be forced to champ at the bit in the desolate shadows where my injury had driven me.

Very soon I should be putting off my uniform, the evidence of past glories, to assume the anonymous garb of a civilian. I should no

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longer be a wounded soldier. I should become merely an infirm victim of a commonplace accident!

But my work and the daily routine quickly drove out such evil and sad thoughts.

I came off rather well in the final examinations of the first semester, in February, and won an un hoped-for ranking. And so the four months of hard labour were crowned with success; I could look to the future with less apprehension now.

When we returned from a short vacation, in March, 1919, we discovered that the second semester would be very unusual. The little group of cripples and boys to which we had been reduced was swelled now into a flood of demobilized soldiers whose studies had been interrupted by the war—years ago! And so the halls and corridors of the *École Polytechnique* were filled with the customary uproar and shouts of peace-time. Traditions must be renewed, at all costs! . . . First-year men must suffer from practical jokes! For a week the house was turned upside down incredibly

thoroughly. Echoes of the upheaval reached me in my small room, where every day I met more and more of my old friends as they came back.

Then order descended upon us again, and every one set to work in an atmosphere of life and exuberant energy.

But how many of those who should have been with us were lying out there, sleeping their last sleep in some corner of earth generously enriched with their blood! What noble faces forever vanished, what precious destinies broken!

We had watched them disappear, one by one, the friends of other days who knew our best thoughts, who had played and studied with us, and whose future had even then begun to flower with happy promise.

But old friends had returned, so that my life at the *École* was very cheery; and working hours were followed by moments of comfortable relaxation. Most of my old comrades expressed their sympathy for me. And if a few refrained from saying anything, fearing that

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I might be sensitive, I understood them. It was timidity and not indifference, almost always, that governed their attitude; I was very careful not to judge them harshly.

Nearly every day some one of my intimates would call for me, and we would walk down the *rue Soufflot* to the Luxembourg Gardens. During the war they had been almost abandoned, stripped of everything that had made them the focal point of the Latin Quarter. Now, with every faculty of the University and the *Polytechnique* crowded, the Luxembourg began to look like itself again. Since I knew every twist and turn in it, I felt somewhat at home, as once I had when I loafed about it before some examination; for me it had an intellectual atmosphere, and I loved it.

Poor Luco! The young heads, still full of the illusions of their twenty years, that may not look again upon the balanced intricacy of your gardens *à la Française*, and for whom your shaded ways have no more charm!

I would remain there for a part of the afternoon, seated in the middle of a group of

friends, adding to the talk, commenting on the events of the day, discussing professors and courses, and—by means of an occasional whisper in my ear—keeping up with the romantic affairs which inevitably blossom in early spring.

Then I would stroll back to the *rue Descartes* and study until evening.

Later I might go to one of the small music-rooms with two of my friends. There I would stretch out comfortably on a bench while one of them tuned his violin and the other struck a few preliminary chords on the piano: I was ready for music, my favourite diversion.

I have to confess here my inability to describe the pleasures which that art in its various forms gives me. It is utterly impossible for me to say how much it energizes and colours the air I breathe, and creates a motion of life in the immobility that surrounds me.

The selections that my friends very gladly played were mainly classical: Beethoven sonatas, with their depth of human sadness and their escape into ineffable happiness; Mozart

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sonatas, with their delicate swift charm; Bach sonatas, severe in inspiration and learned in measure, whose harmonious symmetry is analogous in my mind to certain geometric conceptions—pure in line and sober in elegance.

On Wednesday, the day on which we had no classes, I frequently spent the afternoon with friends, who entertained me by reading or by playing the piano. I loved the quietness of those visits and the intimacy lent them by the music. Once more I felt the just proportions of life, I was appeased and satisfied, and my endless dreams and reveries gained a vaster field and a richer ornament.

It was then that I became acquainted with the modern composers, whose inspiration is descriptive and whose manners are astonishingly individual:

Debussy with his preludes and arabesques created idealized landscapes of blended phrase, delicate colour and shifting contours in my mind. When the passionate or homesick melodies, the nocturnes and intermezzi, of Borodine were played, I saw the barren steppes

and the many picturesque scenes of Russian life. The dances of Granados, because of their brisk and vibrant cadences, gave a quality of relief, movement and colour to the images which automatically shaped themselves in my head. And certain barcarolles reminded me of the restless rhythmic waves of the ocean, by reason of the swinging recurrence of their beat.

The mental effort required for this musical imagery was not comparable to that by which I called up out of my memory the places and friends of my youth. I knew that I should never renew the latter impressions; and so I compelled myself to revive and hold fast to the vestiges of them. In turn, the figures of musical origin were, I was sure, more valuable to me than the artificial creations of my imagination as I listened to a description of a noted view, or building, or work of art.

After dinner I often went to concerts, in order to rest from the day's work. I especially enjoyed the orchestral symphonies, which in my opinion unite powerful emotion with a

complex mental world in equilibrium, and so compensate for the loss of the æsthetic pleasures I once derived from architecture.

My sensations then were inexpressible. I shall never forget the day when at the *Concert Colonne* I first heard Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, the one which realizes more than any other the composer's noble formula: "*Durch Leide, Freude!*" . . . Happiness through Suffering.

And what a marvellous faëry land opened before me as I listened to Rimsky Korsakoff's *Schéhérazadé*!

Do I need to speak of the great hush over the audience while the largo or the andante movements majestically develop? It is not a vain metaphor which maintains, with M. Mauclerc, that music is a true religion, with its priests and its faithful, so like is the quiet thoughtfulness of a concert audience to the spiritual communion of a religious gathering.

If there is a respect in which music surpasses the other arts, it is in the force of the emotions kindled. Its influence in that par-

ticular is almost physical. Acting as it does upon the original substance of our lives, it affects the senses immediately, communicates at first hand with the nerves, which are powerless to resist its impulsion. Thanks to my faculty of abstraction, I am peculiarly quick to enjoy that element in music; and I cannot help thinking of the familiar action of the confirmed concert-goer: he closes his eyes and leans back in his seat, in order to forget his body completely and surrender himself to the mysterious influence.

During this same period I also spent many evenings with old army friends at the regimental reunions which were rather common for a while after demobilization. The bond between soldiers then was very strong, and though later it was relaxed considerably, certain friendships weathered the effects of time.

In the war we had had a chance to see our fellows at close range, since we were compelled to live, eat and sleep side by side and experience the same hardships. So we were able to evaluate them in those moments when

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their characters stood out in clear relief against the unrestrained savagery of the fighting, that stripped them of affectation and revealed the selfishness of some, the generosity of others. And what splendid unsuspected traits shed a full light upon the nobility of some that we had thought incapable of great action! And what baseness appeared in others!

After I left the Front my friends felt obliged to keep me posted on their movements and their exploits; now I was invited regularly to their reunions, where they lived over again the dangers they had dared together. Therein they showed a spirit of mutual understanding that pleased me.

I took advantage of the Easter vacation that same year to go on a pilgrimage with several friends to the old trenches of the Chemin des Dames.

One fine morning in May we boarded the train for Fismes, where we met other men of our battery, near the station at which I had alighted for the first time in 1915. We lunched

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and then set out through the little town, following a familiar route that I had traveled often at the beginning of the war. As we went along, my companions described the ruinous condition of the village, which had gone almost untouched until 1918 and which had once been a place of delight to us when we were marched back to our rest-billets there.

Further on we came to Barbonval over a road that I had taken many times on my horse; it was a lovely village overlooking the Aisne valley, from which one could see a part of the sector we had held. Barbonval! The memories attached to the name! And the happy moments I had spent there in the winter of 1915 when I was in command of the echelons of our battery.

We hailed a few of the villagers, a handful of whom had been persuaded to return to their ruined homes immediately after the Armistice. Then by the road that wound down into the valley we passed through OËilly with its sugar refineries, and over the Aisne river bridge to Bourg, and from there a short

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distance on to the Comin farm nestling on the plateau that had seen so many artillerymen—it had got the name Madagascar on account of its shape. It was there our guns had held position for a long time.

Guided by one of my friends I came shortly upon the site of our gun-pits and the dugouts that had sheltered us. Already the grass was disguising the ground beyond recognition, and I could feel the indecision and doubt of my companions. They were finding it difficult to compare this spot with the picture they had of it in their minds. We stayed there for a few moments, recalling the past, examining a grave, a tangled pile of harness . . . all the wreckage of the years that had fled.

Slowly we went back to our car. Three kilometres more, and a station with a little wine-shop attached, on the road from Moulin. We had halted there many times before when as young *sous-lieutenants* we had got out of the trenches for a brief rest.

And now we were near the place . . . the Chemin des Dames. And suddenly all the

emotions that I had endured in the 1917 attack returned with full force. Here, at the Red Line—as they call it now—it was increasingly difficult for my friends to find themselves, the bombardment had so completely altered the appearance of things. Here too the vegetation was beginning to swallow up the scars of the fight and to disguise the contours of the land. We climbed heaps of débris, and little mounds that had once no doubt protected machine-gunners; the plough had not traced a furrow in that soil still defiled by the slaughter of 1917. Meanwhile my ears ached with the contrast: this peace and silence, where once the air had roared and shocked! Only my memory told me this was the place. Otherwise, nothing would have suggested the ghastly struggle here.

Nothing, right here . . . where month after month thousands of men had suffered torture, had died of it, here, often in slow agony, or had come away at last, despoiled as I had been! What misery had been heaped upon this bit of earth!

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Almost with regret we left the spot where so many friendships had been lost and found, and once more followed the river down. We decided that before going on to Merval we would stop at the military cemetery where the men lie who did not endure the grievous days.

It was not one of those unpretentious village burial-grounds where the picturesque element obscures the funereal and clothes mortality in a natural, familiar, and even pleasant dress. Out of the size of the huge plain, out of the barrenness of its graves arose all the monstrosity of the sacrifice and the sadness of the deaths that had made it.

My friends did not need to describe it to me. I had seen others like it . . . Sainte-Menehould! The impression had lasted.

While I stood alone near the entrance, I could hear my companions calling out names as they recognized the ones of our regiment. And then for a few seconds a face shone bright in my solitude: the expressive smiling face of a Bearnais or of a Basque, a gunner in my battery; the keen profile of an officer who had

been my friend ; the fine head of a Bordelais ; the bantering features of a Charentais . . . a whole legion of valiants whom I had thought lost forever out of my mind.

And as we walked slowly away from the sinister ground, I offered up a silent prayer for those whom we had come to visit. "Sleep, my friends, rest in peace. Some are too inclined to hide you in sacrilegious oblivion. But I am of those who, wounded in body and spirit, give you a chief place in their hearts."

That evening at Chateau Thierry, where we had spent several of our leaves of absence, we talked very little ; and in the silence that weighed upon us, all the emotions of the day returned to me. I could not sleep for the crowd of ghosts in my mind, and for the ghost of this country that tied me forever to its dead past.

Though later my regimental reunions came more rarely, there were a few of us that were faithful to the hours so tragically full ; and we were willing to rekindle the light of them in our memories.

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So it was with a diversity of trips and amusements and friendly intercourse that my regular work went forward, and I completed my first year at the *École* without too much fatigue.

Having maintained my high standing I was in a position at the beginning of the second year to decide with which one of the corps recruited by the Government at the *École Polytechnique* I would affiliate myself. On the advice of several persons well qualified to judge I chose the *Ponts-et-Chaussées* and accordingly presented my candidacy, along with a description of the method of work that I had employed throughout my course.

In all the deliberations upon my case I met with the greatest kindness and consideration, and it was not long before I was told that I might be admitted to the corps as soon as I had satisfactorily completed the final examinations.

After that, certain that I should have an outlet for my activity, I continued my studies in an extraordinary peace of mind.

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Of course I should never be a real engineer, in the usual sense of the word, as I had once dreamed of being. I should never help in the construction of those mechanical works of art that carry our civilization into regions that but yesterday were half savage; I should be restricted to the less important jobs; but at least I should be playing my part in the building of a country whose worth was even greater now because of the infinite sacrifice consecrated to it.

For the rest, I have at times been almost overwhelmed by the solicitude and understanding that I have met on my way. And I find myself at last shaping a career that is to all intents normal, out of what I once thought was ruin.

## AT HOME

STRANGER, you who courteously step out of my way when chance throws you in it, you who sometimes return after you have passed and by some kindness show your concern over my physical handicap, you perhaps give a thought to my condition when you go home in the evening, and you wonder what my home can possibly be like.

Well, since you appear to be interested in me, let me answer your unspoken questions and correct your misapprehensions: permit me some evening to take your arm; do me the honour of paying me a short visit. . . . You may be sure that I shall not mislead you, for I am very well acquainted with this part of town.

The door opens and we go down a long corridor to my study. And there, in a quiet that

is friendly to friendly talk, let me do the honours of my house.

Sit down in that chair; it is usually occupied by the woman who reads to me or by the secretary kind enough to lend me the use of her eyes. Here is the desk where I keep my Braille notes when I am making some certain study. Further off, there on that little table is my typewriter, which I use for my personal correspondence; you cannot imagine the pleasure it gives me by enabling me to express myself without anyone's help.

Then, here are my books. I have plenty of them in the house, the library is full of them, and those shelves there. They are my constant friends. But I can only touch them now; I can no longer catch an inspiration in a single glance at them, nor thumb their pages casually and look at the illustrations. I do not even arrange them or care for them myself now. Others usually do it for me.

To make up for that, however, once the book is closed and the reader gone, all the brightness and glory of the thoughts of the

past come flooding into my mind unchecked. In the peace of solitude and contemplation I bless the patient labour of those artisans of the intellect, the friendly host who have set between covers the best of themselves and have passed on to us their spiritual exaltation, their stern mental discipline . . . everything that enriches a civilization.

In this room I never feel quite lonely, the air is full of the charming companionship of ideas. And besides, I have a good number of books in Braille. You may see them there. That bookcase is filled with them, enormous volumes, which I transcribed myself. And though I rarely have leisure now to read them, occasionally I will take them down to retrace the long hours devoted to them, and dream of the time when I was a student.

Often in my brief moments of loneliness it is to the smoke of a cigarette that I confide my impossible reveries. And if my eye cannot watch the soft blue rings as they mount upward in graceful capricious designs . . . what of it! My imagination creates them,

and then finds infinite relaxation in the sight.

And I certainly would not be without the telephone that you see over there on the small desk. More than any other instrument placed in my hands by the ingenuity of inventors, the telephone puts me on an equal footing with every man. When I am using it I feel most strongly that destiny has not set me upon an impossibly difficult road: with it in my hand I have none of the regrets that depress me inevitably as I talk immediately with my friends and cannot see their living faces! . . . Over the telephone the voice reigns supreme; I can mark its every inflection, hear all of its over-tones . . . and appreciate all of its various charm.

Now, to give you an idea of my adaptation to this familiar setting, I should like to tell you a story:

Some time ago a stranger called at my house; he was shown into this study, where I joined him a little later. He introduced himself, shook hands with me, sat down in front of

me, and explained the purpose of his coming. It had to do with a life insurance policy. At that, I very naturally mentioned that his company would probably raise some difficulty over my exceptional incapacity.

"Well, what precisely is the nature of your incapacity?" asked the man—after having talked with me for fifteen minutes!

A few months earlier a similar incident occurred under like circumstances. But that time the visitor went away without ever suspecting my condition, and learned of it afterwards only indirectly.

My power to deceive callers to that extent, without intending the deceit, is always an occasion of some little triumph for me . . . which you perhaps incline to smile at.

But you must not imagine that I find pleasure only in books, typewriter, cigarettes and telephone, and the small satisfactions of my vanity such as I have described. Listen to the light steps outside in the hall now, then that soft knock at the door: allow me to present my two children.

Here comes the older, a girl, and the younger, a boy. They have a predilection for this room, because it is here we have our family games in the evening, when my hour of relaxation comes around. While the younger prowls about everywhere, reaching for everything to satisfy his growing curiosity, the elder already acts like a young lady; she prefers to listen to the stories I tell her, or even to my serious conversation.

She was not quite three years old when she began to notice that there was something peculiar about me, something abnormal in the uncertainty with which I moved. So, anxious to lessen my difficulties, she made herself the energetic ally of her mother, she set herself to do me little services, by drawing up the most comfortable chair for me or by taking my hand to keep me from stumbling.

A number of times she asked me questions that revealed the secret wonder in her mind. And then one evening, after my secretary had gone home, the child asked me why I never read to myself but always had people read to

me. A little later, holding up her hand toward my face, she demanded, in her grave childish voice, "Do you see my hand, daddie?" . . . I had no answer; and to avoid making one told her, "We'll talk about that another time."

But she was obsessed with the idea, she returned constantly to the point after that. And shortly I had to tell her the truth and confess that I could not see her hand, or her face, or anything. Usually quick to respond, now she remained silent. I am sure it was impossible for her to understand clearly what loss of sight meant, the notion was so contrary to everything she had learned.

Actually, I think I would have been just as perplexed if I had been in her place when I was her age. As every child does, I had often shut my eyes to play, when my sister and I were out walking in the *Tuileries* or the *Champs Élysées*: I knew then what it was to see nothing, but I also knew that I should presently open my eyes and end the game, and should see once more my sister's face and the far perspective drawn by the long avenue of

trees; and, besides, I could go wherever I liked without anyone's help. But how can a child explain to itself an eternity of the night with which it amuses itself for an instant?

My blindness is no longer a secret to her. She is constantly observing me, she watches the movements of my fingers tracing the Braille symbols, and is not unaware of my perpetual need for other people. She is full of plans for the future, and talks of the day when she will read to me and take me out for a walk by herself. In the summer, when we go to the country, we often stroll about together in the garden, which she knows quite well, she busily describing the changes that take place, the colour of the flowers that she picks, the colour of her dress, knowing instinctively that I require more affection than another.

Her brother is still too young to understand, and when he runs to my arms he thinks that I am quite capable of protecting him against any possible enemy; when he walks along with me, holding to my hand, he thinks that I am

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leading him; and before long he will be asking me to read to him the little stories in his picture-book.

But a day will come for him as it came for his sister when doubt will arise . . . then the mystery of the eyes that do not see.

Later, it is he will be my aid and defense.

And later. . . . But what will his twenty years bring forth? What is in store for his generation?

Children, may our suffering defend you from the horrors we have known, and the future hold for you a better life, a less adventurous one!

The tenderest hour of all is their bedtime. As I lean over them I listen attentively to the final murmur of the final prayer, that is hardly done when the sand-man comes by. And after sleep has fallen upon the dark head and the golden, I catch myself still there spying on the gentle breathing of the children,—the sound of the innocence of their dreams. . . . Have you sometimes marked the motionless calm of those sleeping masks? The curve of the lips,

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the faint trace of a smile that reflects the serenity of their slumber?

And do you know how much I would give to see it for just an instant?

You cannot conceive of the value of a child's smile, because you see so many; you cannot imagine the bitterness that is mingled with my great happiness.

I had thought that when I established a home I should have broken through the circle of spiritual and physical torment and suffer only from my personal limitations. I did not foresee the pain of which I have just spoken.

Have you thought of the moment when, holding in my arms the little crying body that had just been born, a creature of my flesh, I suddenly realized that I should never look upon it save through the descriptions of other people, that I should be denied the expression of its eyes, the shape of its mouth, the lineaments of its beloved face?

I have familiarized myself, however, with the way of a child's life. I can appreciate as well as anyone their changing moods, their

sullen tempers and their customary difficulties. And more than an ordinary person I can discern their wonderful gaiety and spirit in the tone of their voices. Nothing delights me more than the tremendously noisy games they play about the house. Now that I am myself a centre of affection I have found the gamut of my emotions to be a rich and varied one. Everything left me to enjoy I have enjoyed. And at this moment, in the presence of the young lad who has just taken my hand, every regret for the past disappears, and I live without reservation in the happiness of the life about me.

And then, the pride of knowing that one can still create life that is whole in all of its attributes and its capacities for happiness and pain! I have lit this light which gladdens me, I have formed these eyes that will soon guide me and illuminate my mind with the pictures which they see! That, if you like, is my greatest comfort. Though in me life shows somewhat imperfectly, I can still leave a complete expression of it behind me, as though I had

lost none of my faculties. When I consider that, I have no misgivings of the future.

But you have not seen the children's mother. . . . Look through that door. That is she at the piano, playing a nocturne. Do not, I beg of you, speak of the integrity and the smiling goodness that emanates from her. Others have told me before. And I do not need to be told! For several years now our common joys and trials have brought us infinitely close to each other.

Did I know her before? Unfortunately, no. Some men in my state have been happy enough to marry a girl they had seen in childhood, whose face therefore remains always present, and young and charming, in their memory. . . . But why stir the ashes of a vain regret? Long ago I resigned myself to the darkness of her face with whom I live.

Moreover, the expression of a sympathy of mind and a mutual affection does not depend entirely upon sight: the cadenced rise and fall of a boat on the Loire, the animated conversations in the wind that stole half the words, the

understanding of pain, that went beyond the physical, the rejection of prejudices, the hand held out cordially to adversity, the noble *élan* of a generous heart . . . these things brought us more closely together than mere visual admiration might have done, which not rarely is deceitful and impermanent.

Suffering did not frighten her. Though very young, she was old enough to have tended suffering in the war hospitals, and she knew how to fight it with her tireless patience, her serene gaiety, and the devotion with which all the women of her generation dressed our wounds.

And now, my friend, you understand why I like this existence of mine. And you understand also why I have the right to consider it normal, since all its feelings are simply and naturally human.

Here in this narrow space is the wealth of my life, the centre of my universe. I know every detail of it, I move about in it with an undisturbed mind, I am at ease in it. Surrounded by those who are dear to me, I follow

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my destiny, more laboriously, to be sure, than another, troubled by many unappeasable desires, but forgetting them in the consolations which have been scattered so prodigally in my way.

The labour and the diversions of the mind seem to me nothing but the broken fragments of happiness when compared with the warm love and the simple joys of the heart, when compared with all this about me that has brought me from an unnamable obscurity to this peace and contentment, to this light!

## CONCLUSION

I was convinced for a long time that the crushing blow I had received gave me a sort of immunity against future trials. But I now conceive of it less naively. The further I go the more I see that the limit of evils inflicted upon man will never be reached.

Joseph Bertrand, when he formulated the law of probabilities, said of luck that it has no memory. That is true of fortune, close kin to luck; and for my part I look for no kindness from it. The sole advantage that I have won in the past has been drawn from my very fight against my fortune.

Because I have sounded the depths of the most profound despair that it is given man to know, I have slowly learned that one may take benefit from the most unfavourable events and may, by the persistency of his will, force them to serve him in the conduct of a worthwhile life, one not barren of satisfactions.

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All the disinherited, like myself, all those to whom hope brings no healing of their wounds I should like to inspire with my ardent faith in action, my unswerving confidence in our future.

Nature still has joys to give, more exquisite perhaps to one who has kept entire his spiritual and intellectual faculties; and I know of secret beauty in the earth, far beyond the sight of the keenest eye.

The man whose heart has been touched by love, tenderness and friendship has no right to curse his fate. He will have known everything in this world that makes it significant.















